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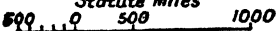
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ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE



H.I.M. HAILE SELASSIE, KING OF KINGS, LION OF JUDAH

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

by
LADISLAS FARAGO

PUTNAM
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To
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PART ONE

THE COUNTRY

CHAPTER

DEPARTURE

ON a cheerless December afternoon in 1934 the first newspaper posters about Abyssinia appeared in London streets. "Bloody Incident in Abyssinia," said one; "135 Killed," another. The Press reports were all fairly short, and all of them came from Rome. The correspondents in Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia, as yet knew nothing of the Wal-Wal incident. I was only passing through London, and the town interested me more than news from Abyssinia. In London, too, a battle was being fought at that time—over the Belisha beacons. I found this fight more interesting, and forgot Abyssinia, which was too distant to care about.

But Abyssinia was not to be set aside so lightly. More and more reports came in, the country was mentioned on the news bills more and more frequently, until the distant, unknown Empire became the topic of everyday conversation. Popular interest grew; Abyssinia was soon no longer an unknown country. Then I travelled back to Berlin. Late winter had just begun in Europe. Snow lay in the streets and a cold wind whistled between the houses. I longed for the south. But not Abyssinia!

In the meantime Abyssinia had started on her new career: her news appeared on the leader pages of the Continental papers. The problem was studied with particular care in Germany in view of her own strained relations with Italy.

So I was not altogether surprised when my chief suddenly asked me: "Can you leave for Abyssinia in ten days' time?"

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

Ten days! Huh! Rather short notice to prepare for a journey to Abyssinia! But naturally I said at once, with enthusiasm: "Yes." A map hung in the ante-room of the office—an old map advertising a shipping line. With this map I made, for the first time, a mental picture of Abyssinia. It lay a long way off, only a few degrees from the equator, distant from the coast, between great colonial powers. I could not find the Abyssinian Consulate in the telephone book. The German Foreign Office explained that it was under "Ethiopian General Consulate." I admit that I was terribly unversed in things Abyssinian at that time. I wanted information about the land and the people, so I went immediately to the General Consulate. Major Hans Steffen, the honorary Consul-General in Berlin, was unfortunately not at home. He had already gone to Abyssinia. His deputy, a young pensioned German officer, told me quite openly that his chief was trying to sell aeroplanes and anti-aircraft material to the Abyssinian Government. He did not know much about the country that he was representing.

"You will have to go by ship to Jibuti and from there by train to Addis Ababa. You will require an Abyssinian permit to enter the country and I shall have to get that from Addis Ababa. When do you want to go?"

"In ten days," I replied.

He laughed at me. "That's impossible! We cannot get a reply to our request for at least six weeks, and even if we try by telegraph, it will certainly be three weeks before we get word."

"Why does it take so long?" I asked, crestfallen.

"That's how they do things in Abyssinia," said the representative. "The people work so slowly!"

Then he went on to explain that I must take plenty of sheets and blankets, because otherwise I might get leprosy or other infectious diseases in the hotel beds. Finally he wrote out a telegram for which he took no less than £15. "God in heaven!" I thought; "if a telegram is so expensive what will the journey cost?"

DEPARTURE

At the travel agency I was pleasantly surprised. The official obviously knew more about Abyssinia than the Consul-General's deputy. "During the last few days we have had sheaves of inquiries," he explained as he arranged my tickets. "The boats to Jibuti are very crowded. I advise you to book your cabin in Marseilles by telegraph." He also despatched a telegram: and he charged me £85 for the ticket.

In a back street in Berlin stands a little tropical outfitter's, a relic of "better times," when Germany still had colonies. Then good business was done there. The proprietor received me with the confidential smile of an omniscient adviser.

"So you want to go to Abyssinia? Then you will require at least three linen suits, a white dinner-jacket with light black trousers, like these, various sun-helmets, a tropical medicine-box and everything packed in tin trunks. I know exactly what you want, sir. I spent no less than fourteen years there." I talked at length with the good man while he measured me for the white clothes; I tried on the sun-helmets, inspected the tin trunks, and even bought mosquito-nets. "In Addis Ababa you will be in great danger of malaria," said the all-knowing salesman, "and I would not recommend you to sleep under strange mosquito-nets. The danger of leprosy is too great for that." Another warning about leprosy. Abyssinia began to make my flesh creep.

Meanwhile a miracle had happened: the Abyssinian Foreign Office had supplied my permit within forty-eight hours. I received a neat visa for the "Empire d'Ethiopie," and six days after my chief had asked me whether I could go to Abyssinia, I was *en route* for Marseilles, to sail thence in the "overcrowded" *Félix Roussel*, of the Messageries Maritimes, to Jibuti.

The boat was remarkably empty! There were, in all, eighty passengers, and of these eighty only three of us were bound for Jibuti. "Odd," I thought. "No one seems to know anything about Abyssinia."

But I was wrong: one of the stewards had lived for six years

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

in Arusi, a southern province of Abyssinia. This simple sailor was the first man to give me really cut-and-dried information about the country. He was my cabin steward and he saw my ticket and elaborate equipment.

"You are going right on to Jibuti, monsieur?" he asked one day.

"No," I said with some pride, "I am going to Addis Ababa."

"Then why are you dragging those white suits about with you? You will not have much use for that kind of thing in Addis. The town is 8,000 feet above sea-level, and the climate is like that of the Mediterranean."

But I put more trust in the salesman in the tropical outfitter's than in this good sailor, until, about eighty miles from Addis Ababa, my freezing body made me realise that even that all-knowing tropical expert knew nothing of Abyssinia.

Our *Félix Roussel* was of the "A" class of orient steamers and was sailing to Kobe. She was a sister ship of the tragic *Georges Philippart* that went down in flames in the Gulf of Aden. I did not, of course, hear this in the travel bureau, but from an unfortunate French ship's engineer. His company had got him a berth on this ship and now he lived in continual fear. He slept at night on deck with a life belt under his pyjamas. His concern became even more evident when he learned that our voyage was the ship's last: she was shortly going to be rebuilt, having proved herself too slow.

We sailed through the seasons, five days to Port Said and another four to Jibuti. In the Mediterranean spring storms were still raging, but in the Suez Canal summer was already advanced. In the Red Sea we lay in the full glare of the tropical sun, almost senseless with the heat, our faces glistening under the spick-and-span sun-helmets that we had bought at Simon Arzt in Port Said at midnight.

In the Suez Canal at Ismailia we met the first Italian troop transports. They were anchored some way from us, but everyone swarmed on deck to look at them. Through my

DEPARTURE

field-glasses I could see few signs of life on their decks. The young North Italians lay dazed in the tropical heat. There were many motor water-wagons on board, also some ordinary mail-vans.

After this meeting, Abyssinia was our only topic of conversation. An official of the Suez Canal Company, who was travelling with us from Port Said to Suez, told us of the fabulous sums that the Italians have to pay in francs for the passage of these ships through the canal. Every man costs 7 francs, and every ton of freight 25 francs. According to him the ship that we had just met was the hundred and fiftieth sent by Signor Mussolini to Eritrea and Somaliland. He worked out for us that up to that day Italy had paid out 39,000,000 francs in dues alone in the Suez Canal.

The slow sailing through the canal got on my nerves. I wanted to be in Abyssinia and to check with my own eyes the contradictory statements of all who were "in the know." On the ninth day the little French-Somali port was within range of my glasses. Jibuti welcomes strangers with an eternally blue sky, the shining mountains of the salt-mines, and the wreck of the French luxury liner *Fontainebleau*, which was burned out in the harbour. The *Fontainebleau* is a great but ill-designed and pompous advertisement for French shipping lines as she lies there in the harbour.

The combined forces of the Jibuti beggars besieged us before we disembarked. They swarmed in small boats round the ship and shouted for "Un sou, monsieur!" They were even prepared to dive into the slimy sea for coins. This was actually illegal. His Excellency the Governor-General had made himself hopelessly unpopular among the black community by this fairly reasonable prohibition. To restore his damaged popularity he repealed a no less hated law which forbade the natives to be seen in the streets after 7 p.m.

Jibuti is a strange, remote place: eleven degrees north of the equator, it has the comforts and discomforts of a French

provincial town. The buildings gleam white in the bright glaring air, but the faces of the people are dark. It is a black and white town with a thousand and one moods; the inhabitants are at once obsequious and impudent, laughing and sullen, contented and sad, rich and poverty-stricken, purse-proud and unassuming.

It is a beautiful town! It is a horrible town! It is, above all, a hot town. Sweat rolls in beads from one's forehead under the well-aired sun-helmets. Heat creeps up one's limbs. It is impossible to sweat any more—melting point is reached. At 9 a.m. the streets are already quiet, without movement, desolate, as if a magician had made the inhabitants vanish. But they are only in hiding. The day's work begins at five in the morning. Even official offices are shut from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. The post office is also closed for this time, and the Governor-General does not receive until eight o'clock in the evening. The high tone of Jibuti is the buzzing tone of the electric refrigerators. At first when I heard this noise I did not know what it was. Flies or flyers? It was electric refrigerators! Neither running hot and cold water, nor built-in wardrobes, nor garages, are the mark of luxury in these tropical hotels, but simply electric refrigerators. It would be good to have them fitted in the bedrooms, for one cannot sleep at night in Jibuti. The air is like foul water. It is impossible to breathe; one gasps for air like a fish landed high and dry.

After 7 p.m., when the telegraph counter at the post office is opened (the other counters are not opened until eight o'clock), people begin to appear in the streets. Waiters bring tables and chairs on to the terraces and—in the neighbourhood of the equator!—artificial palms, imported from France. The first guests are already sitting there. All of them drink whisky in accordance with the laws of etiquette in the tropics. More and more people come into the streets. Cars drive past, taxis, the finest taxis in the world. "Libre" is seldom seen on the metres, for the Somalis, the natives of the town,

DEPARTURE

would do anything for taxi-rides. They beg from every foreigner and get a few sous by acting as guides, only to spend all immediately on a drive. Taxi-driving is the Jibuti natives' passion.

But in other ways too the town is *mondaine*. For one thing, it lives by night. There are many night cafés; there is even—as in Paris—an apache quarter. The apaches are here, too, only for foreigners. Much more interesting in my opinion are the women of these black bars. They are naked from the waist up; the last naked women in a part of the world that formerly went naked. Their bodies are well formed, and any Parisian revue dancer would envy their shoulders. They have small, piquant, snub noses, and a coquettish, self-conscious gait. The night cafés are always full. Jibuti has a large tourist traffic. Here the black apaches beat up their girls in the Parisian style (10 francs), here the same girls afterwards dance wild erotic dances (20 francs) and are at your service for anything else (30 francs).

They even allow themselves to be photographed, which is impossible anywhere else in Jibuti. The town is strictly Mohammedan and the Koran forbids photographing. (How on earth did Mohammed know, 1,300 years ago, of the modern invention of the camera? He really does seem to have been a genuine prophet.) The women fear barrenness if they are photographed. But these girls don't mind that!

The provocatively short skirts of the girls flash in the light of the electric lamps. They wear silk. Everyone here wears silk! Ship-loads of it come from Japan and it costs almost nothing. Japan floods the whole east coast with her cheap wares. In the shops of Indian merchants everything is "Made in Japan."

The real market of the Japanese invasion, however, is the Place Menelik, in the middle of the town. Here one is always surrounded by twenty to thirty followers. At first they offer every conceivable product of man, and then, if they are turned away (this is actually only theory, in practice

it is impossible to turn them away), they start on their "only this" tactics. They listen to what the foreigners are saying. The word "shoe" is caught; five of them disappear at once, and in ten minutes a shoe shop is set up in the main square of Jibuti.

In the Place Menelik the following articles can be bought: real pearls for 3 francs each, silk underclothes, Mauser guns, tin trunks for travelling on to Abyssinia, aphrodisiac powders and pills, coral, lion skeletons, sword fish in every desirable and undesirable size from 30 francs to 3 francs (which means that they are first offered for thirty, and for three you can "take it, monsieur!"), German 10 pfennig pieces for 8 pfennigs, French newspapers of 1924, Hungarian stamps, English cigarette cards, genuine Abyssinian silver work (made in Czecho-Slovakia), genuine Meissonier porcelain (made in Japan), genuine French perfume (made in Germany), genuine Eau de Cologne (made in France), genuine Egyptian cigarettes (made in U.S.A.), genuine Somali knives (made in Sheffield). There is everything, but everything is imitation. If you buy anything you will kick yourself because your friend has paid half for the same thing.

The askaris—native police—keep their eyes on the bazaar for some time, then, waving their truncheons and rapping out "Allez!" they chase off the salesmen. They follow them to the nearest crossing. There the constables get their commission and disappear, while the merchants reappear, all smiles.

It is a mystery how these dealers who are always on the run make a living. I bought six pairs of socks, "Made in Japan," for 6 francs. They cost 1 franc a pair or $3\frac{1}{2}d$. I wanted them for the nine-day voyage, so I expected each stocking to last a day and a half. I was disappointed. They tore as I drew them on. Also only the top pair fitted me, the others were meant for children's feet. But all the same the price was only threepence halfpenny, and out of this the manufacturer, the middleman, the shipping company, the Jibuti wholesaler, the policeman, Japan, France, and even the salesman, must have earned something. Only the Japanese

DEPARTURE

and the police force of Jibuti become rich through these Japanese goods, through selling them in large quantities.

But Jibuti has also real sights of its own. The mountains of the salt-mines, rising up among palms and olives, are wonderful. There are oases nearby, and an unending desert where sand-storms drive out its dwellers into Jibuti. But the town itself is unbearable. "Fancy hankering after the privations of the desert," said a Jibuti to me. But he who knows the town understands this longing only too well.

The next morning I drove from my quay-side hotel to the station. I was taking the train for Addis Ababa and if I missed it I should have had to wait four days. This was the only train to the Abyssinian capital. The one strategic railway in this troubled corner of North-East Africa had only two trains a week.

CHAPTER II

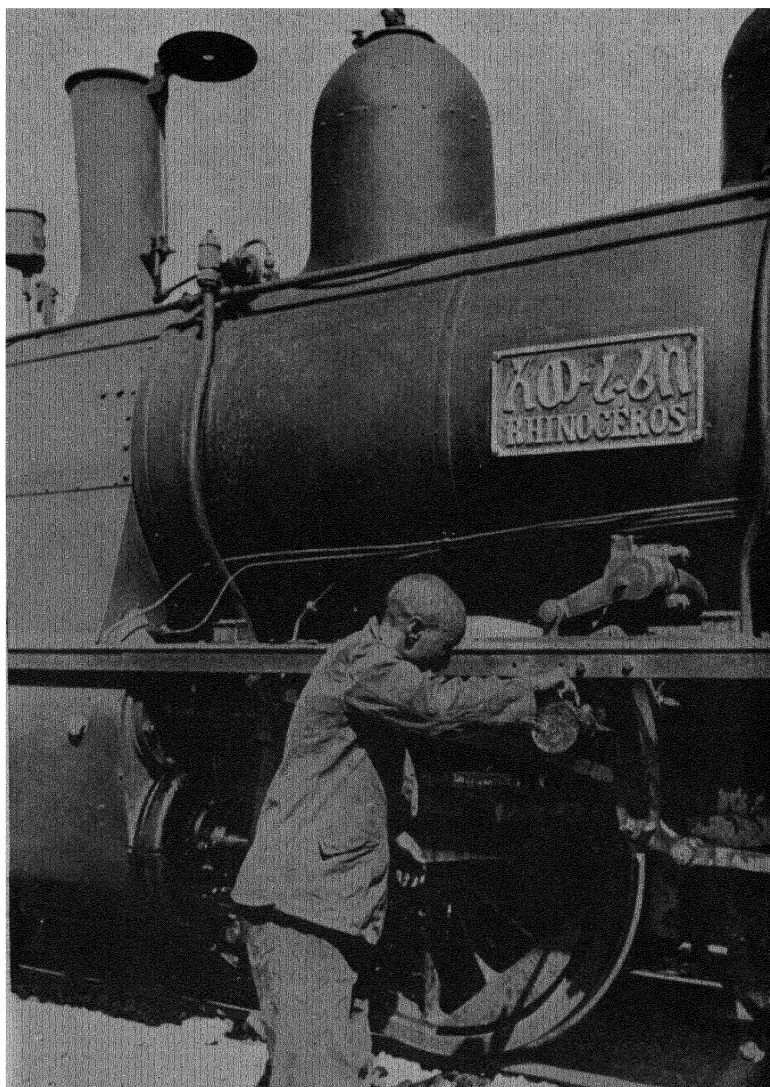
THE MOST EXPENSIVE TRAIN IN THE WORLD

AT the station the coloured life of Africa rises to its highest ethnological pitch. Somalis, Frenchmen, Abyssinians, Greeks, Armenians, Indians, Englishmen, Annamites, Italians, black, white and coloured peoples scrambled on the platform. Motor-cars and camel caravans crept past. An Amharic girl from Debra Libanos stood near a Parisian woman, a Somali fighter from Dodolo beside an Italian. The station at Jibuti is the junction of the cultured West and primitive Africa. Amid this confusion the train was waiting. It is the most expensive train in the world.

At the end of the last century an enterprising French company had hit on the idea of building a railway from Jibuti, the port of French Somaliland, to Addis Ababa, the growing capital. The Frenchmen were at once adventurers and idealists, for although they were encouraged by the extensive reforms made by the Abyssinian Emperor, Menelik II, national considerations also played a part. The whole of Abyssinia's not insignificant trade passed at this time either through Zeila, a port in British Somaliland, or Khartoum, across the Sudan frontier. Caravans were under way for weeks before they reached the capital. The French thought that by building the railway they could direct the traffic through Jibuti. They formed the Franco-Ethiopian Railway Company with 40,000 shares. Emperor Menelik II granted them a concession for which they paid, among other things,



SOMALI CHILDREN BEGGING AT A RAILWAY STATION



“RHINOCEROS EXPRESS”

THE MOST EXPENSIVE TRAIN IN THE WORLD

1,000,000 rifles. They were for the most part of the 1870 pattern, and they are still to be seen to-day, slung over the shoulders of Abyssinian warriors.

After indescribably hard work the first section of 309 kilometres between Jibuti and Diredawa was opened in the year 1902. From this point Menelik hindered its progress in every possible way, and finally allowed it to continue only with the proviso that the company became international.

But in spite of his orders it remained under French direction, and construction was eventually resumed in 1906. For six years more, over 8,000 black workmen toiled in the deserts, steppes, and volcanic districts of Abyssinia, until the second stretch of 476 kilometres was finished in 1912. The company had accomplished their long task: Jibuti was joined by railway with Addis Ababa. But ruin stared them in the face, and to redeem the stock-holders' money they made their railway the most expensive in the world. The first-class fare from Jibuti to Addis Ababa costs £16; in England the equivalent fare would be £2. Freight is carried at the rate of £43 per ton; in England the charge is £4. No one wanted to pay such high rates, so goods went as before, by camel through Zeila and Khartoum.

After the war, the Emperor Haile Selassie I, then Prince Regent, Ras Tafari, undertook the modernisation of the country on a larger scale and on that account the railway became a paying concern. To-day it is even such a profitable and important business that it was no worthless gift of Monsieur Laval to Signor Mussolini during his visit to Rome, when he presented Italy with 3,000 shares in the company.

This railway is, however, not only the dearest, but also the slowest on earth. The train takes three days and two nights to complete the 460-mile journey. But it does not run at night; the line runs through regions that are too dangerous for the safety of the passengers and goods to be guaranteed.

Since the trouble with Italy the railway has been the topic of various diplomatic debates. Its importance is almost

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

invariably exaggerated, but the company profits by this conflict. The train is now always packed, and it is, of course, impossible to book seats in advance, even though there is a Cook's agency in Jibuti. One has to be on the platform a full hour before the train leaves. First the customs officials have to be passed. My bags were opened on my arrival at the station. The customs officer questioned me only about weapons. The importation of firearms into Abyssinia is particularly rigidly controlled. This control has introduced a new trade at Jibuti. Retail arms smugglers have established themselves; they importune the white passengers and make discreet offers in front of the station. One man pointed to forty trucks that were standing in a siding. "That's arms and ammunition, monsieur, destined for Abyssinia. A Hansa Line steamer brought them two weeks ago. They were to be sent on farther, but all traffic in arms was forbidden by a decree in Paris." He is undoubtedly wondering how he can get this consignment over the frontier.

It takes, on an average, six Somali boys to carry a single trunk, but at last I took my seat in the carriage. The kaleidoscopic collection of people on the platform, however, attracted me. Small salesmen squatted beside the train, their wares laid out on the ground. There was even a buffet set out offering Abyssinian tit-bits. The engine was born thirty-two years ago in Switzerland. She is named "Rhinoceros" and has a right to this exotic name, for the "Rhinoceros Express" runs on a truly African railroad reminiscent of caravan treks with all their exertions and annoyances. The driver—a young Frenchman—wore a sun-helmet that was white when he bought it in Marseilles. The stoker was a Somali youth, black by nature, blacker still with coal-dust. Behind the engine were five grey vans, filled partly with goods and partly with passengers. In the third one, which is carefully shut, were samples of a Czecho-Slovakian armaments firm. If anything happened to this van on the way, we should all fly into the air. But the brakeman who accom-

THE MOST EXPENSIVE TRAIN IN THE WORLD

panies it seemed to have good nerves. He smoked without concern on this travelling powder chest.

In the middle of the train a white car caught my eye: the carriage for white passengers. Shortly before seven o'clock the crescendo of noise in this African station rose to a fortissimo. Shrill whistles resounded and I experience my first surprise: the train that was going to take three days and two nights for the journey left punctually according to schedule at 7 a.m.

It was a long time before the passengers in the white carriage thawed. They were even more uncommunicative and suspicious than railway travellers in Europe. Each had his mystery, or at least pretended to have. Many had been tripped up by the law in Europe and had had to leave in a hurry. They had been quicker than the warrant which was sent after them. In fact, the ladies and gentlemen who travelled on this line had, to bourgeois eyes, unusual, exciting, and even romantic occupations. They were either adventurers, big-game hunters, spies, armament dealers or treasure seekers. Now and again a modest African explorer was of their company—there with the intention of writing at least two volumes on "Unknown Abyssinia."

Like a panting, lumbering omnibus on a slow sight-seeing tour, our train passed the wonders of Africa. The heat was scarcely bearable. In some places the thermometer registered 132° Fahrenheit in the shade. Gazelles and antelopes flashed away in fear of the crawling engine. A baboon watched the familiar sight and we all looked out of the window waiting for him to wave. A caravan of camels passed in dignified silence. An ostrich exposed the falsity of the legend, not dreaming of hiding its head in the hot sand. Large cacti bordered the railway. A herd of zebus whirled up the burning sand.

Suddenly the sky darkened, as if a black cloud had covered the sun. The train was enveloped in a cloud of sand. Our pace got slower and slower until we had to stop on an open

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stretch of the line. The driver jumped into our carriage and we closed the windows. A red, furious sand-storm had caught us. It raged for three hours. The sand eddied relentlessly higher and higher. Our compartment was, in the twinkling of an eye, filled with fine sand, which hung in the air before piling up on the floor. Nothing could keep out these fine grains. They got into our eyes, which we made blood-shot with rubbing. Our cameras were ruined and our closed bags filled with dust. Then suddenly the storm dropped as quickly as it had come.

The sun shone on us again, the train continued on its way. Soon afterwards a travelling companion, a French major, got out. He was going to the frontier to relieve his colleague. The commandants are changed there every two weeks. Europeans cannot survive for longer in this shadeless country.

It was twelve o'clock. We had travelled for five hours and put the first ninety kilometres behind us. The next stopping-place is Douenle, the Abyssinian frontier station. The green, gold and red national flag flaps from a high staff. Great strapping policemen were waiting for the train. These station police are a ragged lot dressed in miserable uniforms. On their shoulders they carry rifles of the pre-flood period which Menelik got in return for the railway concession. However, they keep wonderful order on the platform. In French Somaliland countless beggars swarm on every station, but in Abyssinia they are not to be seen. The hungry Somali children may only look at the richly filled train from a distance.

The black frontier officers appeared and demanded my passport. Here at the frontier the extremely strict organisation of the officials was very noticeable. The man in charge wore a cape and was accompanied by four assistants. One carried a rifle, a second the customs control stamp, a third the ink-pad, and a fourth looked on. The man in the cape scrutinised my visa and I saw at once by his expressionless face that he could not read one word of it. He spoke a few words to his

THE MOST EXPENSIVE TRAIN IN THE WORLD

fourth lieutenant, who turned to me and asked in perfect French: "Have you an Ethiopian visa, monsieur?"

"Yes, of course," I answered, and pointed it out on my passport. The five men from the frontier station then carried on a lively conversation in Amharic. Eventually it was explained that my visa was invalid.

"How is that?" I asked, disconcerted.

"Ah, monsieur, Berlin is too far off."

For 10 talers I was given an Abyssinian visa that was, this time, in order. And so with the other passengers. For one London was too far away, for another Paris. Those without visas got through quickest. The frontier regulations had taken three hours.

Shortly afterwards I experienced my second surprise. The train arrived at Diredawa on time—4.34 to the minute. We got out of our white carriage there for the first time, to put up at an hotel for the night. Hordes of people met the train. Perhaps fifty of them rushed about the narrow platforms. They were all porters of the only two hotels in the town, and were divided into two groups. At the head of each a man waved his arms. They were the proprietors and they fought bitterly for every passenger. We could not decide in which hotel we wanted to stay. The hotel whose men snatched up the luggage quickest won, and we could do nothing but follow our property. The Continental Hotel won me. It was a fine and, at first sight, comfortable hotel. I wanted a bath. Never had I felt so dirty after a journey.

"I am sorry, but we have no water," apologised the Greek manager.

"No water" was repeated at supper and we had to drink warm mineral water, imported from France. "No water" we were told next morning when we wanted to fill our thermos flasks. In Jibuti we saw the last of water, and throughout the rest of the journey our greatest desire was for a gulp of cold, fresh water, clean from the mains, as you get it in Europe.

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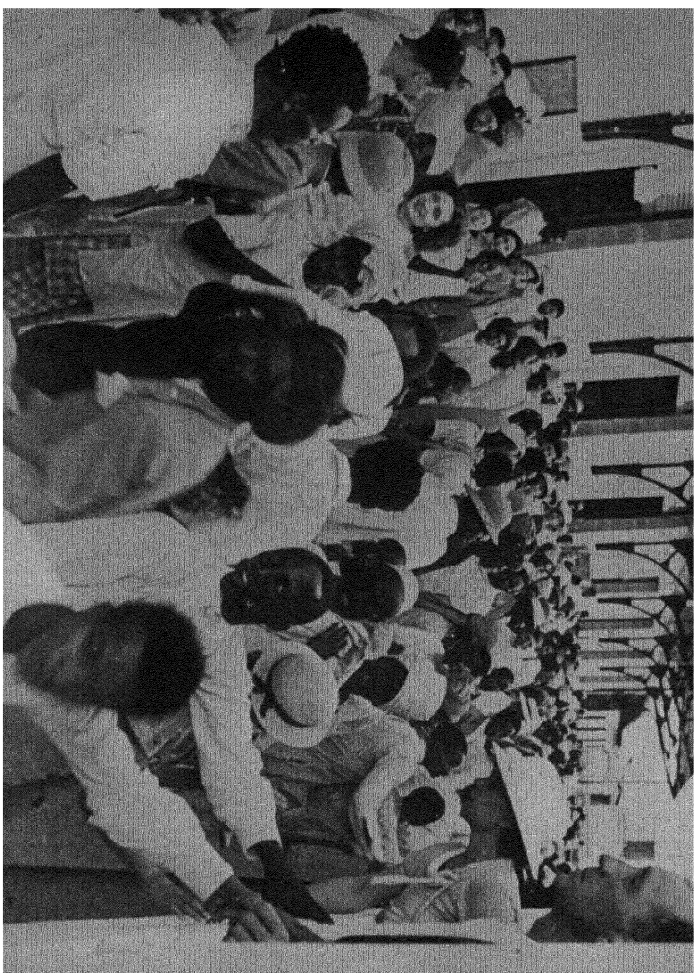
In Diredawa I also experienced my first inspection from the Abyssinian customs. Bellowing officials stood at the low benches and turned our bags upside down. I had to pay 3 talers for my typewriter. The whole pantomime was begun again before we left the next morning. The luggage was rummaged through a second time and I had to pay another 3 talers duty on my typewriter. After leaving Diredawa we went through the volcanic district of Abyssinia. Near the line the country was barren and cheerless, but in the distance we could see fertile gardens and inviting bathing-lakes. I was trying to get a closer view of this chosen land through my glasses, when another passenger destroyed my illusion.

"The country in the distance," he said, "is quite as bleak as this volcanic area. What you see now is only a *fata Morgana*." He gave me a cigarette and introduced himself. "My name is Don Francesco Groffto di Calabria dei Principe de Gilla."

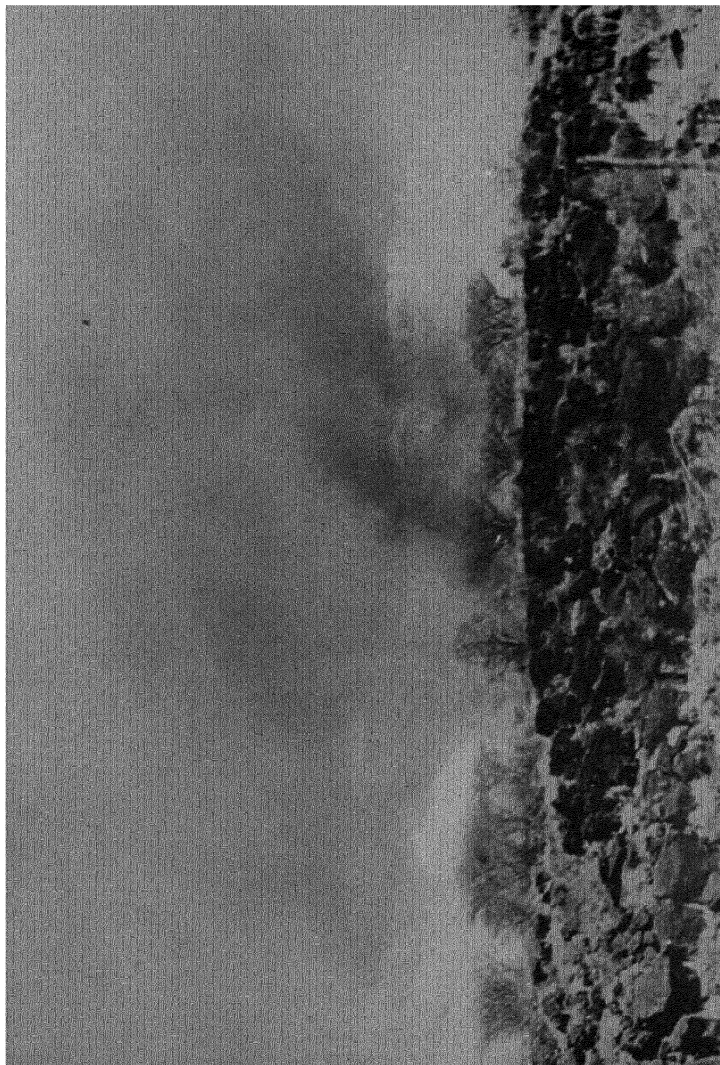
All of us, he included, laughed afterwards over his long name, and he told us a story about his grandfather who had the same list of names.

"After a tiring day's hunting," the story went, "the old man got lost in the Campagna and could not find his way back to the town. He decided to spend the night in a farm. When he knocked at the door a peasant asked who was there. The old prince gave his name in full. A brusque voice replied: 'There isn't room for so many people in my house.'"

The prince was an interesting man to have as a travelling companion. He had left the Renaissance palace of his forefathers in Rome and had taken a destroyer at full speed as far as Massawa. A special ship had brought him from there to Jibuti, and now he was travelling with some secret documents to Addis Ababa. He was accompanied by the Italian Consul at Harar and his wife. She was a beautiful woman. Hers was the passionate beauty of Southern Italy, and her red-lacquered nails were doubly effective in this hopeless wilderness. All the men in the white carriage who had had to



DIREDAWA STATION



A DESERT FIRE CAUSED BY THE INTENSE HEAT

THE MOST EXPENSIVE TRAIN IN THE WORLD

waive women's society for the next few months, envied the Consul his wife. But for her the restless Abyssinian provincial town spelt exile—she was a heroine who was accompanying her husband into the unknown.

The American Consul at Jibuti, Mr. Condayan, was also in my compartment. He had studied in Oxford and was a pundit on the country. For twenty-four hours on end he told me of the problems that were to be met with in the Abyssinian Empire. "The European merchant," he said, "who wishes to trade with Abyssinia has to reckon with difficulties that are unknown in the rest of the world. The Abyssinian is not gifted for trade, and for that reason despises the merchant. He has, besides, no idea of time, so it is an age before a deal is finished."

Another travelling companion was an Armenian who, in former times, was a coffee trader in Jibuti, and who was now going to Addis Ababa to represent a Danish machine-gun factory. A young Austrian was also one of our party. He was ready, he said, to take on anything in Abyssinia. He was dreaming of becoming general of an Abyssinian division. I met him later in Addis Ababa acting as chauffeur to the Italian hospital.

Our train stopped once more on an open stretch. This time camels blocked the line and we all got down to clear them away. It was not easy, for camels are obstinate brutes.

The sun was setting on the second day as we pulled up in the large desert station of Awash. This station is the one important strategic point of the whole railway. We were already 6,000 feet above the sea. The place was built as a fortress to protect the French interests. Strong thick walls surround the bare place, in the middle of which stands an hotel. The windows are only small holes in the strong walls, and even these are heavily barred. One feels a prisoner, paying for one's cell. But these unusual measures of precaution have their reason: they are a protection against wild tribes and animals. The Danakils, the fierce unruly natives,

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often surprise the hotel guests, and in the river nearby all the big game of the Awash Mountains meet here every night to drink. Even more dangerous than the lions are the tiny malaria insects. A single night in this uncanny dungeon hotel can be paid for with an incurable disease. We swallowed quantities of quinine until we felt dizzy, and the ear-breaking alarum called us to supper.

Night brought a serenade, an exotic concert of lion roars, hyæna howls and the terrified shriek of a black watchman who had been bitten by a poisonous snake. When we left next morning he was dead.

On the third day the landscape changed entirely. We went past luxurious plantations, and in Mojjo drank our first cup of Abyssinian coffee. Children on the platforms were selling bananas newly plucked from the trees. The temperature was falling with every kilometre that we climbed farther up into the mountains. Just before Addis Ababa, when we could already make out the street lights in the darkness, the passengers disappeared one after another and changed their white suits for tweeds. And I froze in my beautiful new tropical suit on that late January day.

Worn out and silent in the white railway carriage, we awaited the moment of arrival, but we were again shaken out of our lethargy at the station. Addis Ababa has five hotels, so five quarrelling hotel proprietors wrestled for the new arrivals and about two hundred porters tugged at the luggage. Half of the European colony met the train, which was their only excitement in the monotonous daily routine. We were looked over critically, but the customs officers of Addis Ababa were even more critical and charged another 3 talers duty on my typewriter.

CHAPTER III

ADDIS ABABA—TOWN OF SHADOWS

THE choice of my future home in Addis Ababa was no easy matter. I had inquired on the train for the best hotel in the town, but it turned out, when we stepped on to the platform, that my informant was himself a hotel proprietor. He had recommended the Hotel Gleyse. I became suspicious. The canvassers of the various hotels leaped through the carriage windows and showered leaflets on us. On each was printed, "The Premier House in Addis Ababa." One boarding-house wanted to house and tend me for 30s. a week. Monsieur Gleyse, who had suddenly changed from a genteel fellow-traveller into a dangerous hotel protagonist, demanded £2. The Hotel Imperial was the victor only because the manager had been inspired to quote the highest price.

In front of the fine, new, almost European station, the battle was resumed. This time the taxi-drivers were the combatants. We haggled until the station electric lights were extinguished and we were left in the dark. Then I realised that it was not the street lights that I had seen, for it has no light. In the unbelievably bright moonlight our baggage was stowed away and the journey into the blue began. It was a clear night and the gilded bronze lion of Abyssinia, opposite the station, cast long shadows. The zinc roofs of the houses were shining brightly, but we saw nothing else. At nine o'clock in the evening the town was asleep.

We drove straight along the good asphalt road. Our

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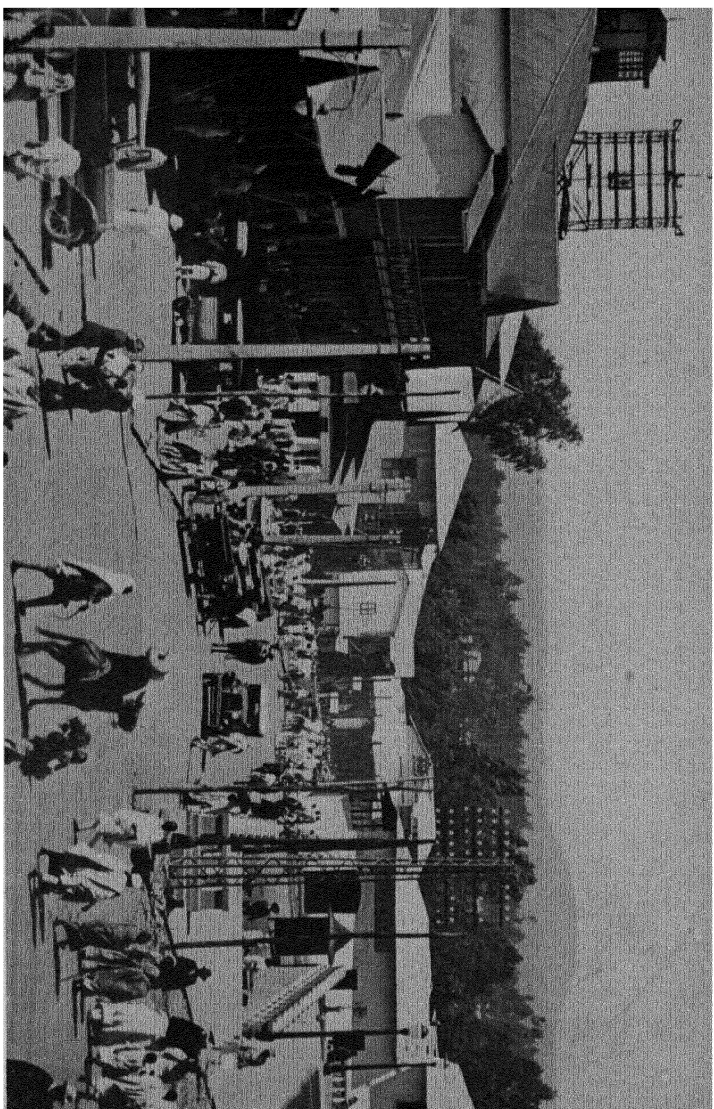
hotel was situated on a hill in the middle of the town. In the taxi I kept thinking of the blood-curdling tales told by my counsellors in Europe, especially the one about the leprosy that lurked in hotel beds. But my fears were groundless. My hotel—a former castle of the Empress Manen—was presided over by a most efficient Greek. The comfort was, as near as could be, European. I got a room with a bath. My first concern on entering the bedroom was my bed. It was clean and had no mosquito-net.

“Why have you no mosquito-nets?” I asked.

The manager replied: “Because we have no mosquitoes.”

Addis Ababa is, in fact, one of the healthiest towns in the world. It stands 8,000 feet above sea-level, but lies in a valley surrounded by still higher mountains. The air is clean, and whoever can stand height feels extraordinarily well in this beautiful climate, although the equator is only 8 degrees south. Breathing and occasional heart attacks caused by the rarified air are the only discomforts during the first few days. Improvidence may have dangerous results if one forgets the cold nights. By day the temperature is on an average of 60° to 70° Fahrenheit, but at night it falls suddenly to 20° or 25°. Warm clothes must be worn at night, and even during the day white suits are not seen. European clothing is the rule, and only sun-helmets remind us that we are in Africa. Pneumonia and sun-stroke are the commonest illnesses amongst Europeans, not leprosy, as I was told at home. Pneumonia is caused by the rapid changes in temperature, and you only get sun-stroke if you leave your sun-helmet behind.

I tried to sleep with the window open. Outside I saw the moonlight becoming brighter against the lovely outline of Mount Intotto. The fresh breeze wafted into my room the scent of the eucalyptus trees, but the cold night air came in too, and to my astonishment I felt frozen in Africa. The sound of voices that I could not distinguish, drifted through the window. Below, a dreary sing-song droned on ceaselessly, until the monotone got on my nerves and I went to complain



MENELIK SQUARE. ADDIS ABABA



THE HYÆNA PIT

ADDIS ABABA—TOWN OF SHADOWS

to the manager. "Those are the night watchmen, monsieur," he said, "and I cannot forbid them to sing. Their trouble is that they fall asleep when they stop singing, so they chant to keep awake." This amusing explanation pacified me, though new voices joined the concert. In the distance I heard deep stifled noises that sounded like lions roaring. And indeed they were lions belonging to the Emperor, which were also having a sleepless night shut up in the Imperial Castle.

Shortly after midnight yet another loathsome voice was added to the nocturnal chorus. Hyænas came into the Ras Makonnen Allée across a ravine called the Hyæna Pit. They come every night in herds. All the dogs in the town then go on vocal duty, and it was their barking that eventually got me out of bed. I shut the window.

I was wakened punctually by the first beam of light. The sun rises at 6 a.m. and sets at 7 p.m., with the utmost regularity, all the year round. That is the basis of the time system in Abyssinia. As they reckon the day with a sun-dial, the day starts for them with the first ray of sun. At seven the Abyssinian clocks point to one. At midday it is six o'clock, and at six in the afternoon, twelve o'clock, 7 p.m. is one o'clock at night and so on until next morning. The monthly calendar is as curious. The year has twelve months and each month has thirty days. The remaining five days are celebrated as the New Year and not included in their calendar.

I was told all this by Hailu, the black waiter, who brought my breakfast. As I had a room with a bath I ordered him to prepare it for me. He asked me: "How many tonikas of water does monsieur require for his bath?" Once again I did not understand. Finally he showed me a bathroom in the feudal style with all the necessary requisites at hand: the tub, pipes marked hot and cold, but unfortunately there was no water. The pipes ended abruptly, for Addis Ababa has no water system. If you want to bathe, sulphuretted hydrogen water has to be fetched from the hot springs. The measure is a petrol-can holding eighteen litres—a tonika.

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The price of a bath, including the transport of six such tins, is, in all, 4 gersh, or 5*d*.

When I asked for letters at the post office the official looked at me with open eyes. "What's your name?" he asked, astonished. I said it once again and heard that there was already a Ladislav Farago in Addis Ababa. He was a bank director. My first call convinced him of my identity and he handed over all my post. This affinity in our names was later a great boon to me in Addis Ababa. My name inspired confidence because my namesake was a very influential foreigner, and I was treated with a quite undeserved trust. Through a letter of introduction to William Perry George, the American Minister, I was able to pull more strings. "I shall be pleased if I can help you," he said. "Every stranger makes a change in our monotonous lives, and our Ministry has peculiarly little to do. The whole of the American colony in Addis Ababa comprises four people, so a visit is almost an event at the Ministry."

My arrival was announced in jubilant terms to the Abyssinian Foreign Office in an important note. I appeared myself shortly after this message was delivered and was received at the Foreign Ministry by Ato Tasfai Tagegné, the first Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office who had been Abyssinian Chargé d' Affaires in Paris. He had become a complete Frenchman. He made me laugh later with his delicious caricatures of French political life. Sometimes he would pretend to call a meeting of the whole Cabinet, which began quite peaceably only to end in a denunciation of the Government.

The minister promised me assistance and asked me not to begin my journalistic work until I had obtained the official permission of the Foreign Office. Photography had been forbidden by law ever since certain bitter disillusionments. He mentioned the name of a Swiss flyer who, with the personal help of the Emperor, made a film of the country; but in the studio it was given an anti-Abyssinian bias. A French writer also had promised the Emperor to write a pro-Abyssinian book

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and demanded there and then the journey money to Paris. The Emperor refused and the rascal wrote a clever but false account of the country. And Abyssinia is revealed to the rest of the world through the medium of such books and films. These false reports are the cause of the almost total ignorance in Europe on Abyssinian questions, and such knowledge as exists is impaired by misunderstandings. My thoughts turned to the deputy of the Consul in Berlin, and I had to admit that Ato Tasfai Tagegné had a real grievance.

I dismissed the car in which I had come, and set out on my first tour of inspection. I was on holiday in Addis Ababa. The Foreign Office lies far from the middle of the town though, as a matter of fact, the community is scattered hither and thither. Addis Ababa is not old. The capital of Abyssinia used to be in the mountains of Shoa, some 3,000 feet higher. But the Empress did not feel happy in the mountains, so she had another palace built and called the place Addis Ababa—New Flower. That happened exactly fifty years ago. The new flower began to bloom, and the Emperor Menelik followed his wife, and in 1892 made the still small Addis Ababa his official residence. To-day the town has 130,000 inhabitants. Beside the long streets stand the primitive stone houses of the Europeans and the flimsy huts of the natives made of stone and mud. The dimensions of this African capital are huge. Its 130,000 population live on a plain as big as Paris, and the only means of transport over these distances are taxis, of which there are large numbers. They are excellent new American cars specially sprung for the streets of Addis Ababa, and they are more expensive than in any other country in the world. The shortest drive costs 5s. If you have to call at a Legation which lies rather far out, the fare will be about 10/-. And one is dependent on these taxis, for it is not advisable to walk more than 200 yards at a height of 8,000 feet. If you exceed that your heart palpitates and you are laid low for the rest of the day. A private car is also a costly game. A tonika of petrol costs £1, or 4s. 6d. a gallon. The

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taxi-rank is in Menelik Square. There the brawling drivers rush up and down, and try to entice a fare into their motors by shouting and gesticulating.

Not far down Ras Makonnen Street stands the most modern sight in the town—the policeman on point-duty. A wooden shelter protects him from the sun and he directs the traffic with a hippopotamus-hide whip. There is a wonderful mixture of vehicles in the street. Splendid cars creep alongside long-suffering mules, men carry fantastically heavy loads, asses and camels fantastically light ones. The street itself—it is the street where the hyænas howled at night—has a busy air. It is the main thoroughfare in the European quarter. Here live the 5,000 white residents. Of that number 3,500 are Greeks and Armenians; only a very few are English. Nevertheless the British Ministry is busier than the others, because over 3,500 British subjects, Indians, Arabs and blacks from the Sudan live in the town.

The Europeans' houses are simple. It is not worth their while to build substantial or luxurious homes because they cannot buy their own ground. The law of property decrees that only Abyssinians can own land, so if you build good houses on rented ground there is a danger that the landlord will give you notice to quit and take your house for himself. Rents are extraordinarily low. Only ten minutes away from Menelik Square a stone house can be had for 30s. a month. In the centre rents rise to £10. The national products are also very cheap; eggs, for instance, are sold at 1s. 6d. a hundred. To balance this European goods in the first-class shops in Ras Makonnen Street are ruinously expensive. Here everything is to be had. In the shop windows can be seen White Horse whisky, Cadbury's chocolate and genuine Burberry coats. A metre of real English cloth costs from £3 to £5. These high prices are due to the high freight rates of the Franco-Ethiopian railway and His Majesty's customs. Particularly good business is done in front of a gramophone shop. Whenever a well-dressed Englishwoman listens to the latest H.M.V.

record, the Abyssinians collect before the open door. They have no native music (the Abyssinian idea of song is a monotonous drone), but they all love European and American music. The popular tunes are also appreciated in Abyssinia, and if the shop proprietor should conclude with the Abyssinian national anthem or the Tafari March, which was written by a Frenchman, their enthusiasm knows no bounds.

A large part of the town is called "Broken Wheels." The name is derived from an old steam-roller, which was brought into the country for road-building in the time of Menelik. The machine arrived, but even to-day the road has not been made and the steam-roller has fallen into disrepair. Its cracked wheels gave the district its name. In the same part I met a gorgeous Rolls-Royce with a red "2" on its registration plate. The coachwork had an interesting extension. At the back extra seats similar to those in old-fashioned state coaches had been added, and two Abyssinian warriors squatted up behind. More warriors stood on the running-boards. The chauffeur wore an elaborate green and red uniform. In the car a veiled woman was sitting. The Empress was driving through the town.

CHAPTER IV

JUSTICE IN ADDIS ABABA

I HAD a letter of introduction addressed to Walter Zahn, the German proprietor of a chemist's shop, a character well known all over North-East Africa. Herr Zahn came to Abyssinia twenty-five years ago and had been a personal friend of Emperor Menelik. Although he had been an actor in his own country, in Addis Ababa he had opened a chemist's shop. At first the foreign missions were his only customers, and it was many years before the native population came into his shop. They preferred to be treated by their own medicine-men. To-day, however, Walter Zahn is the authority on medicine, not only in Abyssinia, but also in the neighbouring colonies. He supplies all the hospitals, and the natives come from far and wide to consult the popular Hakim Zahn, as he is now called, for his black patients have appointed him doctor, which is "Hakim" in Abyssinian.

The shop has two entrances, one for Europeans and one for natives. While I was there two ragged figures came through the native door. They had come from Tigré, a distant province three weeks' journey away. The leader of the two wanted to see Hakim Zahn. The chemist went forward and the Abyssinian made a low bow and asked Walter Zahn to laugh. Zahn, uncomprehending, complied. The Abyssinian, much relieved, then described his complaint. Walter was interested to know why he had been asked to laugh and the man explained readily enough: "I heard in my village that you, Hakim, had a gold tooth, and as I wanted to convince

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myself that you were the wise Hakim Zahn I had to see it before I could confide in you."

We all laughed at that and several more crowned teeth were seen. Zahn's golden tooth is part and parcel of the Abyssinian legend and is the only one that matters.

These villagers all had the same complaint—tape-worm, the plague of the Abyssinian. They eat their meat raw and this is the cause of the disease. The remedy is called Kossu. The chemist's shop in Addis Ababa uses fourteen tons of this medicine every year. After the two had been treated by the chemist's assistants, they sat down. Zahn's black servant asked for payment but the men refused point-blank. The spokesman came forward again and said: "We have got money for the medicine (and he showed his silver talers) but we do not want to pay until we are sure that the medicine that you, Hakim, have given us proves effective." There was no possible reply to this so they sat down for hours on end and only paid when they were satisfied with results.

The chemist's is also the news agency of Addis Ababa. Nearly all the prominent personalities of the town pass through the Europeans' entrance at least once a day. They bring their own news and exchange reports with each other. I was unconsciously breaking my promise to the director of the Foreign Office, for I collected information ardently and was astounded at the contradictory views of my informers. "I think that you have wasted your money on this journey," scoffed a Swedish doctor; "the war-scare will blow over." The Emperor's pilot-in-chief was of a different opinion. "Within a short time," he said, "war will be a reality. The Emperor hopes to fight out the conflict before the League of Nations, but Italy replies that it is a matter that concerns Italy and Abyssinia alone and must be settled between them." I realised that the inhabitants of Addis Ababa knew less about the trouble than most of the rest of the world. A few Amharic and French weeklies are published, but not one of them had, up to then, written a single line about the whole business.

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It is not that there is a censorship in Abyssinia. The Abyssinian journalists simply know nothing, and keep silence rather than publish fanciful tales of terror.

Even Dr. Kurt Ewart, the medical expert and commercial adviser to the Government, cannot give accurate information, and he has lived in Abyssinia for eleven years and has become naturalised. He is the only European who has mastered the difficult Amharic language, and can speak and write it. He took me into the great yellow building of the Ministry of Trade, which stands in a busy street. Hundreds of people were waiting in the large courtyard, and the mules which had brought clients from the interior grazed on the scanty grass. I was led into a dim room, the private chamber of the Cabinet. It was empty and I had time to look about me. At one end stood a throne used by the Emperor when he presided. At this moment the Minister of Trade, Ato Makonnen, accompanied by six lackeys, came in. He is a young man of thirty-five. His Ministry is the only one that works systematically and possesses a permanent staff. The officials sit in countless rooms, and are experts at pretending to work at high pressure when they are really sunk in a slough of inactivity. Ato Makonnen conducted me through the rooms. Undoubtedly the most interesting section is the Statistical Department. Here the clerks use calculating machines which give the room a completely European appearance, belied only by the clerks' native dress. The departmental chief insisted on being interviewed, so to oblige him I asked a few questions, to which he replied in the most interesting manner. He gave me exact details of the problem of Japanese imports; the country's trading agreements; the import duties which were the State's only income. He made no mystery of Abyssinia's difficulties. The imports were steadily rising, and the huge supplies of arms and munitions were a new burden. The exports had not risen correspondingly, and Abyssinia can only buy economically from abroad if the goods are paid for with her natural products, above all, coffee and skins. An example of

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this payment in kind is the transaction in which an airman, called Mittelhölzer, supplied the Emperor with an aeroplane and in return received a large quantity of natural goods.

The Ministry of Trade has its own Court of Justice. Although only commercial cases are heard there, I had an exciting insight into Abyssinian law. "Tshiki-tshik" means dispute in Abyssinian. It is the country's ruling passion. I saw an instance of it in the street. A shrill cry was suddenly heard above the deafening noise of the Addis Ababa traffic. An Abyssinian stood in front of a policeman and shouted at the top of his voice: "May God open your eyes, sir, and enable you to discern the truth of my case!" Everyone who had till then been lounging about without thought of work, gathered round. Passing motor-cars stopped; the spectators' eyes lit up in anticipation. A Tshiki-tshik had begun. The two litigants had now taken up positions facing the policeman and were arranging their shamas, a kind of Roman toga, in the approved manner. On the right stood the plaintiff, on the left the accused. They were each other's shadows; both danced about, both shouted, and both gesticulated in frenzy. They were in their element. I was mystified by it all, and it was explained to me that litigation can take place in the street.

"I swear by the life of Haile Selassie, that this man stole from me. He took 2 talers and will not return them. Give judgement to the best of your conscience, sir."

The policeman, now promoted to the rank of judge, took his seat in his sentry-box and drew out note-book and pencil from his pocket. He turned to the accused:

"Did you take the money?"

"No, sir, the money belonged to me. I swear it by the life of Haile Selassie."

The plaintiff jumped up. He was irrepressible. He accompanied his foaming accusation with wild wavings of his hands.

"He has stolen my money, the dog, and now he is lying about it."

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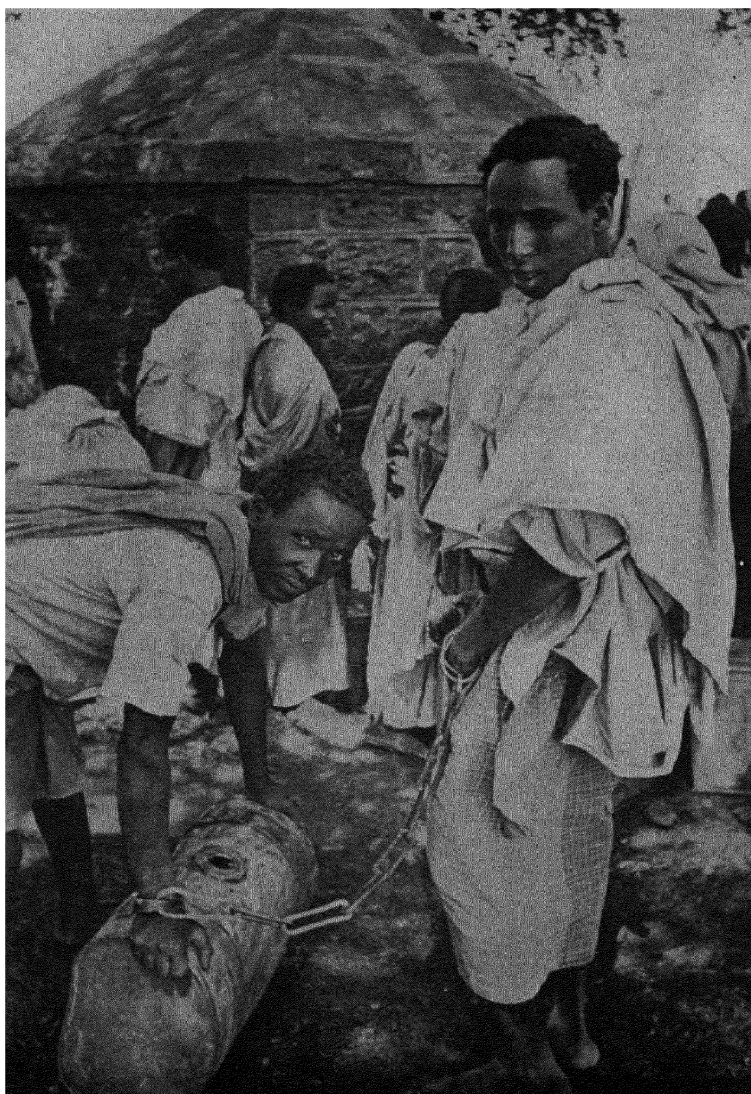
The policeman-judge then turned to the accused and gave judgement. "The thief must be chained to the plaintiff."

Chains were brought at once. One manacle was placed on the prisoner, the other on the plaintiff; and so they had to remain until the thief paid back or worked off the sum he was convicted of stealing. Till then the plaintiff would have to live alongside of the prisoner. The crowd was satisfied and the groups broke up. I met both of the men half an hour later, sitting comfortably at a low table in an Abyssinian bar drinking *tetsh*, the wine of the country, in spite of their wrists being chained.

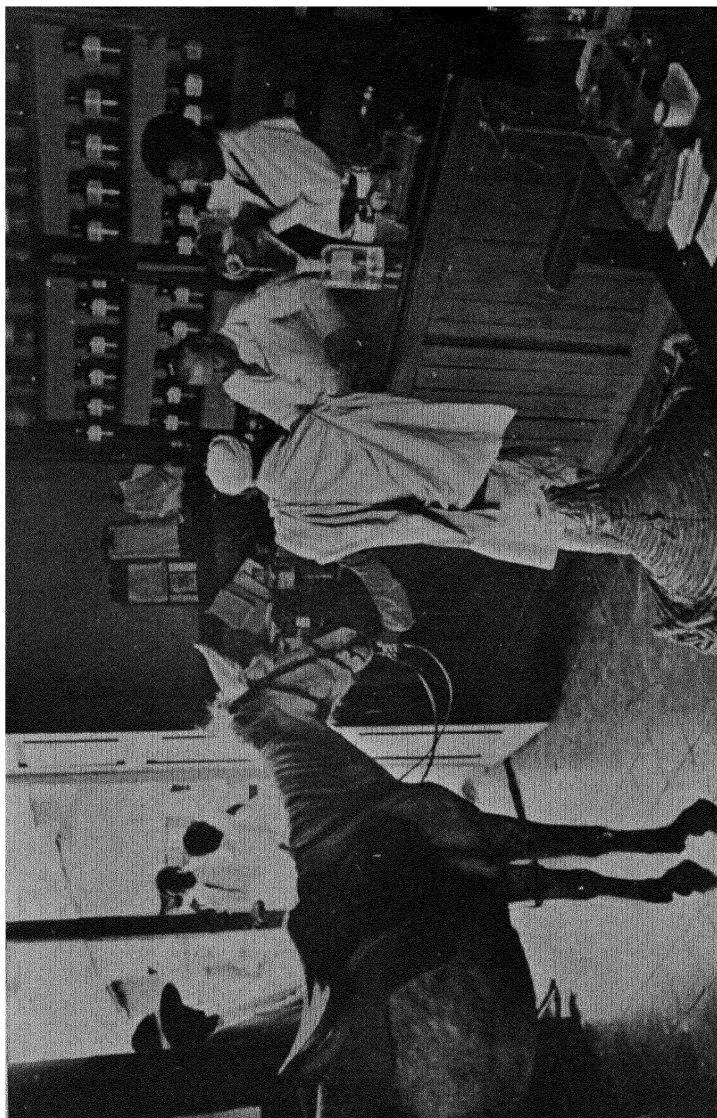
Throughout the length and breadth of Addis Ababa, hundreds of these legal actions take place daily. The Abyssinians run to the nearest policeman to settle disputes over such small sums as 8 *gersh*, or *9d*. In the town stand zinc huts, open on one side, and in each sits a judge waiting for cases. His verdicts are not cheap. The plaintiff first of all has to pay at least 2 talers. But they are only too pleased to expend this sum on *Tshiki-tshik*. In the court of the Ministry of Justice there are larger huts for more serious cases. Here also the judges are in constant attendance, but they are still more expensive, charging 3 talers for a judgement.

The next court of appeal is behind closed doors. Here, on a high podium, sits the Minister of Justice himself. He is called *Afa Negus*, the mouth of the Emperor. He passes judgement in the name of the ruler. Then in *Gibbi*, the Imperial palace, stands the last court of appeal. The Emperor sits here on a gold throne and tries difficult cases himself. This court is called "*Shilot*"—the Court of Blood. Here life and death are in the scales.

It was only with difficulty that I obtained permission to witness a trial in this court. The proceedings are a relic of the Middle Ages. The inhumanly severe sentences might easily confirm the impression that Abyssinia is still a backward and uncivilised country. I was shocked by the lack of pity, but I recognised that the principle of this administration of



DEBTOR AND CREDITOR CHAINED



HAKIM ZAHN IN HIS CHEMIST'S SHOP

JUSTICE IN ADDIS ABABA

justice is to make an example of hardened criminals by merciless severity, which is the only effective way among these uncivilised people.

The Shilot began at seven o'clock in the morning. It was a Friday. The Emperor was absent so the Afa Negus passed the sentences himself. A thief was condemned to branding; a murderer was sentenced to death; a notorious liar was sentenced to prison; a swindler received twenty-five lashes. All this happened quickly, with the same noise and gesticulation as in the street.

The sentences were carried out on the spot. Executioners entered and held a glowing iron on the thief's forehead. The swindler was bound hand and foot and laid on the ground. Then the real work of the executioners began. Brandishing hippopotamus whips, a metre long, they came down once, twice—twenty-five times, until full justice had been done. The victim must have suffered terribly, but not a sound escaped him.

The liar's ankles were tied loosely together with a chain, and so he had to stay until the end of his sentence. Hundreds of these offenders are to be seen in the streets, hopping along. Some of them are well-known and respectable citizens, and are greeted most politely by the passers-by. Only the worst cases are actually imprisoned. The prison is a huge place shut off from the street with barbed wire. The prisoners are not fed and if their families or friends do not look after them they have to go hungry and thirsty. Every day the corpses of convicts who have starved to death are taken away from these horrible prison enclosures.

Death sentences are also performed near the prison. The condemned man's relations and friends may accompany him as far as a high wall, behind which is erected the instrument of justice. Automatic pistols are set up pointed at an upright box open on one side. The victim is placed in this in a standing position; somebody presses the triggers, a dull report is heard, and the man turns round, dead. The

next man is placed in the blood of his predecessor. The executioners never hear the victims of whipping or death sentences whimper or cry for pity. The punishments used to be even more severe, and biblical decisions were common: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. If anyone killed his enemy with a spear the dead man's family had the right to take the murderer's life with the same weapon. The murderer could also buy a reprieve from the family. Twenty-five years ago a human life cost 80 talers in Addis Ababa and 20 talers in the country. Menclik put an end to this state of affairs which enabled everyone to become his own judge. He founded a new penal code, the rulings of which still hold good in Addis Ababa. He was a great, wise and incorruptible judge. Not in vain is he said to be descended from the dynasty of Solomon. Haile Selassie I, however, did not enjoy the dispensation of justice. He even made the experiment of suspending the executioners, but from that day law-breaking increased so much that the Emperor was compelled to revive the cruel sentences.

I left the prison deeply moved. As I was trying to take a photograph I was surrounded in a flash by a furious crowd of men. An Abyssinian with a particularly loud voice proved to be an official of the Criminal Department. He explained that photographing was forbidden by law, and wanted to seize my camera. Other men rushed up and the situation became more and more threatening because I could not make myself understood. As one or two of them raised their sticks threatening to strike me, an Abyssinian dressed in European clothes and speaking French, came on the scene. He had been driving past in his car; he stopped, opened the door, pushed me in and rushed me off at top speed. From that time on I was watched by native detectives. They made work impossible, so that the permit promised to me by the Foreign Office was more necessary than ever. I recounted my grievance to Hakim Zahn at the chemist's shop.

"It will be quite a long while before you receive your

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permit," he told me. "The people here work according to the Abyssinian maxim: 'Don't do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow.'"

An Abyssinian entered the shop. His face seemed familiar, but I could not remember where I had seen him. But when he removed his clothes and exposed terrible wounds all over his body, I recognised him. He was the impostor who had been given twenty-five lashes of the whip that morning. He had crawled into the chemist's to have his sores bound.

CHAPTER V

GETTING INFORMATION

ON the morrow the incident of the previous day had its consequences. I had a black official served up to me at breakfast. He spoke German and had many other occupations besides that of detective. He was a notorious character, easily bribable, but as the career of officer at the Criminal Department is unpopular in Abyssinia, the Government cannot fill the posts with honourable men, and have to be satisfied with such doubtful servants. My visitor showed me something of his better side. He was the very personification of apology. "We are very sorry that we had to detain you yesterday, but we have strict orders to let no one take photographs in Addis Ababa. I would advise you to see to your permit immediately, otherwise something worse might happen to you. The municipal police have been specially warned about you."

All the time that he was speaking he looked round my room. He glanced a very long time at my typewriter on which I had already started an article. Then he left.

As I went out the official who had held me up the day before was stationed in front of the hotel. He made a low bow as I went past and then followed me. I was absolutely desperate. It was already fifteen days since I had set out for Addis and I had been at my destination for three days. I was seeing so much, I had a heap of things to tell, I was just beginning to get the hang of things, I wanted to ask questions, I had information, but I had to hold my peace. I had to wait.

GETTING INFORMATION

The American Ministry got no reply to their note. The first secretary went himself to the Foreign Minister and returned with a mere promise. I unloaded my troubles to the Europeans in the town, but they only stared at me with open eyes.

"What do you expect?" they asked. "You have only been here three days. If you want to be successful in Addis Ababa forget your European haste. You will get no results with it. Ishi-naga—all right, but to-morrow—is the most hard-worked phrase in the language. You, too, will get your permit one day, but not until to-morrow. Always to-morrow!"

This explanation did not pacify me, so I went myself to the Foreign Office, determined to stir things up. They let me wait. I was then received by the Foreign Minister's son, Sirak Herouy. Thenceforward they played with me as with a ball. Sirak Herouy sent me to the Information Bureau, who returned me to the Foreign Office; thence I was passed on to a certain Tadessa Mashessa, a secretary of the Emperor, who threw me on to a certain "Ingida Büro" which turned out to be the Abyssinian for "Information Bureau." After this pillar to post, I had still achieved nothing. It was obvious that the Foreign Office was hindering me intentionally.

Back at the hotel I was handed a telegram from the London office of Associated Press: "Rush news." I was more furious than ever about the delay and wrote a wrathful letter to the Foreign Office. I expressed all my passion between the lines: I began with "Excellency" but did not treat him as such. I sent the letter by the hotel porter, but Lidj Ilmar Deressa, Legation Secretary at the Foreign Office, brought the answer. Deressa made an amazingly good impression. He was a cultivated young man, who spoke English and French and was dressed in European clothes.

He said not a word of my aggressive letter to his chief. Abyssinian etiquette does not allow unpleasant things to be mentioned. But his presence put my mind at rest, and the whole matter seemed to have been arranged. But in reality

it was not. I was still in the Foreign Ministry's bad books and it was lucky for me that they could not say much.

Deressa told me that he had only just returned to Abyssinia. He had been away from his home for seven years studying political economy at London University, and later in France, Switzerland and Germany.

"We young Abyssinians," he said, "are in duty bound to our country. We are the bridge that the Emperor has thrown across to European culture. It goes almost without saying that we are sent to finish our education in Europe or North Africa. Abyssinian students are to be found in all the important universities of the world. The Foreign Minister's sons studied at Oxford and Cambridge. We have to pay for our studies out of our own pocket and then work for the State for nothing. The Emperor, however, has a number of clever young Abyssinians educated in Europe at his own cost. This growing generation will complete the civilisation of our country."

I forgot my anger! I was delighted to know this wonderful young Abyssinian, who promised to help me to the best of his ability. Just as he was leaving he said:

"Please do not begin your work until I have obtained your permit."

"What is this permit?" I asked. "An identification?"

"I am your identification," said Deressa, "but we have still to get your permit from the Emperor. His Majesty is ill! He lies in bed with a chill. Until he empowers us, we can undertake nothing."

The State is Haile Selassie I. Everything depends on him, nothing may happen without his knowledge and sanction. Deressa promised to have my permit made out at the Emperor's bedside. We made a rendezvous for nine o'clock next morning. The following day, at eleven, a porter brought me word that Lidi Deressa could not come at nine. But I already had another visitor. Herr Löwenthal had appeared on the scene.

GETTING INFORMATION

"There's a typical Abyssinian rendezvous for you," he said. "You can never depend upon their promises. They do not mean it badly; it is just because they have no sense of time. They have lived here for a thousand years, and have allowed time to pass them without noticing it. The Emperor has quickened the pace, but they only keep up with difficulty. Another thousand years will have to pass before the Abyssinians change. For the time being they are still lagging behind."

Löwenthal sat opposite me and talked about the country for two hours on end. He had lived in it for seven years, through fat and lean times. This was one of the latter.

He was glad to talk about himself, for his heart was full and he was happy to have found someone who had not already heard his grouses. I was ready to hear this strange European's stories. I saw in him a type; I considered his life characteristic of the white man, who lives in the bush and mountains of Abyssinia. They are sleeping beauties who are waiting for a prince to waken them. But the prince never comes and they remain in exile, living a life that is unworthy of Europeans, and in seven years' time they have sunk so low that they are even satisfied with it. They have no plans, ideas or ambitions.

"I came to Abyssinia seven years ago, after training as a tanner," Herr Löwenthal began, telling me the story of his life. "There was a boom in skins and hides then and I got a position at once. A fur trader engaged me as buyer and sent me into the interior, to Beni Shangul. I had money enough for years! Living in the bush is very cheap. One taler is sufficient for a month and then one can even have luxuries! I am the first to admit that this timeless life in Beni Shangul suited me! I had not much to do and hunted crocodile and hippopotamus. I had my house, and the native chief of the province for a friend. The only attraction the town held for me was women, whom I missed in this lonely wilderness. For a whole year I lived without women. Perhaps you won't understand, but after twelve months I thought I was

going mad. I could not explain what had suddenly happened to me; I could not keep track of my thoughts; I was yearning for something I knew not what. I told Shum, the chief of the province, my troubles. We were close friends, this man and I. He had once had an ugly quarrel with a neighbouring tribe which had murdered some men of his and then stolen their goats. I was appointed judge by the two enemy tribes, and arbitrated to their satisfaction. Afterwards he always took care of me. As soon as he heard my complaint he recognised the cause of my trouble and next evening he sent me a young girl. Shum meant this well and from the Abyssinian point of view he was a true and noble friend. He had thrown all thought of expense to the wind, and had bought me a virgin. She was a child of eight. She shivered all over. Horror and pity overcame me and I returned her to her parents. On the following night Shum sent me another native woman. She became my servant and one year later—you must not despise me—I married this black woman.

“It was certainly unconventional, and my action can only be understood by one who has lived for two years in the bush. Little by little I forgot the European culture I had left behind me. I did not see a newspaper for two years and knew nothing of world progress. I was living among black people and I slowly began to live their life. I had a bad attack of malaria and my new servant nursed me. Gradually the differences between us disappeared and after our marriage I took the new life for granted. My wife died at child-birth. Her death was a great blow and I could not remain in Beni Shangul. So, after three years, I came back to Addis Ababa for the first time. In the ‘metropolis’ I felt like a man walking out of a dark room into the sunny street. The primitive culture that I found here blinded me. I discovered that the firm for whom I had been occupied in buying had been out of business for a year. For eighteen months I have had no salary. Here I am in Addis Ababa without money or any means of existence. Perhaps you can use me?”

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He spoke English, French, German, Amharic, Arabic and the Gallas' language, knew about the habits and customs of the people, and had many friends in Addis and the interior. He became my interpreter.

"If you are waiting," he went on, already acting as my secretary, "until you receive your permit from the Foreign Office, you will have to wait a long time. You must build up your own news agency. You must have your men everywhere, for in Addis Ababa you can learn everything, but not through the conventional channels."

On the same day that I had waited in vain for Lidj Deressa, my "private news agency" was organised. I had my agents in the Emperor's palace, at the post office, in the different ministries, and in the town hall. They were cheap but active. I heard everything immediately; I knew each evening whom the Emperor had received, how many soldiers had been sent to the front, and which provincial chief had arrived in Addis Ababa. I knew more than I wanted to know. Indeed without this organisation I would have got nowhere. With surprising suddenness, the country was confronted by problems which until then had been unknown. A large and civilised European state had in a flash become its enemy. This state had all the means of modern propaganda at its disposal; it had informers, and understood the ways of diplomacy. Suddenly the world was told a lot about the quiet life of the Black Empire, but the reports were dated in Rome, and they were not always flattering to Abyssinia, nor did they always bear the stamp of truth. But Abyssinia could make no reply to this clever modern propaganda. The Government always was a shadow organisation and now that it is faced with urgent duties, it has missed fire completely. It is not kept informed and all its work is borne on the shoulders of one man only, the Emperor, and even he is badly informed. It was not uncommon for me to give him information that I had heard before him. All the news that he gets about the Italo-Abyssinian conflict comes not through his own people,

but from Europeans who have wireless sets with enough power to receive news from European stations. A packet of Press cuttings from a European agency is delivered once a month to the Foreign Office, which means that world opinion on the Abyssinian question is learned four or six weeks late. News from Italy is delivered as much as two months late and it often happened that the Foreign Office would send out urgent denials of statements that the Italians had been making three months earlier. It is unavoidable that the rest of the world should get a one-sided view of the situation because Abyssinia has neither money for telegraphing nor the necessary organisation for distributing news. When war correspondents first arrive they have to fight before they can get their news. The permanent correspondents may know the country better than the special correspondents, who arrive in Addis Ababa on every train, but they know next to nothing about what is happening inside it. For example, a reporter working for one of the big news agencies did not know about the Wal-Wal skirmish until he got a telegram from his firm asking for details. The European papers made a feature of Abyssinia, but the correspondents in Addis Ababa were dumb. In despair the same news agency despatched another telegram: "Rush report on political situation," to which their honest correspondent replied: "There is no political situation in Abyssinia." After that the agency's only course was to send out a special correspondent in the hope that he would find out something.

Löwenthal, the fur merchant, became a genius of a reporter too. This essentially European profession brought him into touch again with civilisation and he began to feel homesick. I felt guilty about waking him from his long dream, for when I left he would have sold his soul to have gone with me. For all I know now, he has lost himself in the bush again.

I had, of course, to engage a man to carry my reports in my despatch-case, for I should have lost caste by carrying my own bag. My servant was called Tierra. He had good

references and the Ministry of Trade guaranteed him. It is reckless in this country to engage anyone without a guarantee. New employees may work quite well for two weeks, but after that they are liable to disappear, taking with them every movable object in the house. A friend of mine told me that his servant stayed as long as eight months and then vanished with 300 talers. He fled to Arusi, a southern province, bought a large estate with his money and is still the richest man in the district. He has enough servants and warriors himself now to ward off a police inquiry.

Under the guidance of Löwenthal and Tierra, I explored the dark quarters of Addis Ababa. We went along narrow streets to visit the arms manufacturers. They have to work in these dark streets because, like the officers of the Criminal Department, they are unpopular.

They are only visited on business, for the people think that they are the earthly emissaries of the devil. I thought differently and the weapon market became my favourite retreat. Here the age-old culture of Abyssinia went on in very much the same way as it had always done, and although a good many Sheffield and Kobe goods were on sale, the smiths were still hammering out on their primitive stone anvils, spears, sabres, chains and all kinds of weapons, and I have invested a small fortune in Abyssinian arms. Tierra was my business manager. He knew only two German words, good and bad, but they sufficed to tell me all that the smith must not hear. Plenty of business was being done for there was a genuine boom in this industry. The salesman demanded the gigantic sum of 5 talers for a fine curved sabre that I was examining on Tierra's recommendation. By raising his fingers Tierra signed that it was not worth more than 3 talers. Our signs were not lost on the salesman and he told me in broken English:

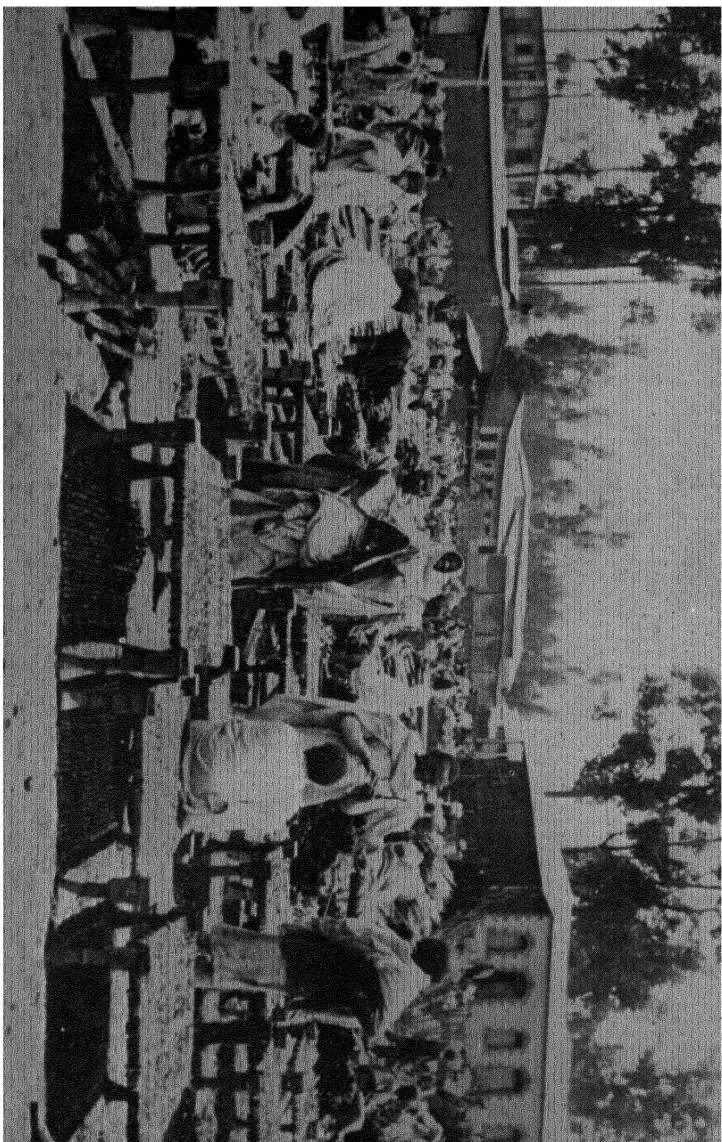
"At one time you certainly could have bought that sword for 3 talers, but now that we are at war, everything is twice as expensive."

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

At the same smith's shop, I heard a wonderful way of reckoning time. When I asked how old one of the swords was, he replied: "At least six kings old."

The shoppers drift up and down the streets in a constant stream. The town-dwellers, dressed in white shamas and well shaven and clean, make a sharp contrast with the country people, who are dressed in rags, underfed and emaciated after their long caravan journey. These wretches come to the town to sell farm products and to buy stores for the next three or five years. Only small quantities of the cheapest goods are sold in the poverty-stricken shops. Cotton, out of which the people make their own cloth, is the most popular of the wares on sale. But the arms makers manage to do some business, and to judge by the number of women who gaze through their windows, so do the jewellers and silversmiths, who belong also to the lower class.

I could study the different races of Abyssinia in these streets. The population of Addis Ababa is composed chiefly of Amhara who are the ruling class in the Black Empire. Abyssinian history is a story of bitter racial wars. It took the Amhara, who are more intelligent and warlike than their neighbours, more than a thousand years to establish themselves as rulers in the land. They are the aristocrats of Abyssinia. They have a culture of their own that has been handed down for generations. Their origin cannot be traced with any certainty, but according to a tale they tell, their patriarch was Menelik I, the child of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Old books that were found in the Cloister Islands confirm this legend, but these ancient writings seem to have been prejudiced. The one fact that is unexceptionable is that the Amhara are very different from all the other races. Apart from their fuzzy hair they have none of the characteristics of the negro. They look intelligent and vital; their noses are well formed, their eyes alert, and their mouths well cut. They are better built and proportioned than the other races,



BEDSTEAD MARKET IN ADDIS ABABA



A TYPICAL AMHARIC CHIEF IN FESTIVAL DRESS

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and their skin is also lighter. They do not consider themselves to be negroes, and as a matter of fact they belong to a Hamitic-Semitic mixture.

"We are red, the others are black," I was told by a prominent Abyssinian. He was exaggerating for they are really coffee-coloured. A pure Amharic race no longer exists. In the interior where the tribes are more nearly homogeneous, and live in close proximity, intermarriage, particularly among the Amhara and Galla, has blotted out all trace of a pure race. Of the total population of ten million people only 2,500,000 Amhara live in Abyssinia, but they occupy all the important posts. They not only hold themselves superior to the other races of the country they govern, but they hate and despise them. There is no other country save America where negroes are more deeply despised than in Abyssinia. The Amhara call them "Shankala," or nigger slave, and that is the most insulting word in the language. When the negroes of America dream of a free black African Empire, they do not know what they are talking about. The Amhara hold themselves aloof and would never think of asking for their help. The natives invite the Amhara to the annual world congress of black people, but never have the Amhara deigned to reply.

The largest race is the Gallas, who number about 4,000,000. To judge by appearances they are slow by nature, which is possibly the reason for their defeat at the hands of the comparatively small race of Amhara. The Galla women are very beautiful. They are slim and of a proud carriage and well made, and have always worn bobbed hair. You can tell the unmarried from the married by a difference in their beautiful style of hairdressing. A clever race of Tigre live in the province of that name. They are closely related to the Amhara. The Danakils and Somalis inhabit the southern and N. East districts of the country. They are entirely untouched by civilisation and are blood-thirsty, uncivilised and dangerous, while their own kith and kin in French

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

Somaliland are peaceable and clever. The Guragis are the workers of Abyssinia. They are a mysterious slave race who are supposed to be descended from white slaves brought out of Egypt 3,000 years ago. While the Amhara, Galla and Tigre are afraid of work, the Guragis will put their hand to anything, whether it is work in the fields or in the primitive mines, masonry, or carrying loads; they are always industrious and unassuming. In Beni Shangul live the Shankalis, a backward race of negroes; in Harar the Hararis, a thick-skinned, obstinate and proud people who originated in Arabia. In the neighbourhood of Gondar there are some 50,000 Fallashas. They are an unknown race of black Jews. Recent researches point to their being Amhara who were converted to the Jewish faith by missionaries. They are the only Jewish community among the large Christian and Mohammedan religious sects. The Amhara themselves are Christians, and their religious disputes are often the cause of political strife. The other tribes are principally Mohammedan, but they are not encouraged to practise their religion.

The racial question is one of this troubled land's most weighty problems. The individual races hate each other, and the Amhara regard them all as their defeated vassals and expect tribute money. While the subjected races fight among themselves, they are united in their hate for the Amhara. Opposition between the Amhara and the Galla is particularly fierce.

Haile Selassie I tried to put an end to their perpetual warfare by giving governmental posts to representatives of the Gallas, but this was of no avail in pacifying them. Abyssinia's future depends above all upon the solution of this racial problem, which is aggravated by religious differences. If the Emperor should succeed in subduing these groups of people, heterogeneous not only in character and temperament, but in morals and customs, he would in all probability be able to resist invasion. It looked as if he had approached nearer to his goal during the last year, but urgent state of their foreign

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affairs has the effect of shelving internal problems. A foreign invasion might destroy this pacification for ever. There is no doubt that the racial question will always be the first problem in this country, whether it remains free or is brought under foreign control.

CHAPTER VI

EUROPEANS IN ADDIS ABABA

WILLIAM PERRY GEORGE, the American Minister's first secretary, held himself partly responsible for the success of my work, so when he saw that there was still no reply to his note, he arranged a cocktail party.

"You might as well fill in your time," he said, "by meeting the Diplomatic Corps."

It was an excellent idea, for diplomatic circles are the most exclusive in the world, and in Abyssinia, now the centre of disturbance, they play a particularly important role. For years on end they have led a sleepy life; then suddenly the Wal-Wal incident woke them with a jerk. To-day these foreign representatives at the court of Haile Selassie are all working at high pressure. The governments of the world are continually telegraphing for reports, just as the big papers demand news from their special correspondents. The foreign ministries have also to take care that no report that their colleagues despatch is overlooked by them, just as the journalists have to cope with competition among themselves.

I had already had the opportunity of meeting a few members of the Diplomatic Corps and I must admit that I was disappointed by them. I expected to hear something of what was happening behind the scenes, but usually the tables were turned on me, and it was I who had to inform them. Mr. George of the American Legation once said to me:

"I am truly sorry that I have to be told far more by you than you can possibly get out of me, but it is the fault of the

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unusual circumstances that obtain in Abyssinia. We cannot always be running to the Emperor, and apart from him there are no means of learning the facts, and, you see, it is dangerous for us to obtain secret information, for in the first place we cannot rely on it, and in the second place, we are liable to get into bad odour as diplomats if the source of our news service is discovered. Suddenly the State Department at Washington want reports on Abyssinia and they send me telegraphs almost every day. I can assure you that my work gives me plenty to worry about, for the legations in Addis Ababa do not know what to reply. We are all awaiting events, which should happen, and perhaps will happen, but they have not come about yet. We, too, just like the Emperor, must have patience, and if this indefinite waiting is both tiring and exciting for us, it must be shattering for the Abyssinians. And in the end there are no results to show for it!"

The American Foreign Office's decision to appoint one of their first diplomats, Mr. Hanson, Minister at Addis Ababa after the Wal-Wal incident, is an example of the concern felt by foreign powers over the Abyssinian situation.

"And that proves," stressed Mr. George, "that the American Foreign Office itself has not got the Abyssinian problem taped. In America Hanson—who was Consul-General at Harbin after the war, and later in Moscow—is called the 'trouble shooter,' and now he has been posted to Addis Ababa because he is supposed to have had experience of State upheavals; but there is no trouble here for him to shoot. Perhaps it will come later, if this skirmishing should turn into war, but it will be too late then to do anything, and even the smallest interests of the white population will be left unprotected. In a case like this the Emperor is our only hope. He will oppose the Abyssinian revolutionaries more fiercely than a foreign invasion, for he knows that he owes this to the reputation of Abyssinia as a member of the League of Nations."

The majority of the legations have, as always, local duties to perform. These consist principally of passport and consular

business, for the secretaries are in Addis Ababa for the benefit of their fellow-countrymen rather than their ministers. Only at the Italian Legation do they have to work—I will have more to say about this later—day and night, but their job is pointless. They spend all their time in decoding long telegrams. Even Count Luigi Vinci, the Italian Minister, has no insight into his country's programme, and when I met him for the first time at the cocktail party, and asked him some questions, he replied with a candour unusual in a diplomat:

"I honestly cannot tell you. Il Duce is the only man who knows Italy's aims in Abyssinia."

The Italian Minister had come to the Imperial Club, where the party was held, accompanied by his entire staff, to show that they had both time and the wish for social life in spite of trying circumstances. The Diplomatic Corps was there in full force, for cocktail parties are not an everyday occurrence in Addis Ababa, and the life of the diplomat, always secluded even in the capitals of Europe, is as dry as dust here in Abyssinia. The foreign ministers live in small but luxuriously furnished houses standing in the middle of wide parks, which the Emperor Menelik presented with great generosity to the different states. He himself had all the land that he required. There the diplomats live in a little world of their own, fenced off with barbed wire from the primitive surroundings outside. These legations are virtually a piece of the country that they represent. The English Legation is England, the French Legation France, and the German Legation a part of the Third Reich. The various ministries are situated far apart, and connected only by rough roads, and on that account weeks pass without the foreign ministers seeing each other. They only meet regularly once a month at the house of the Belgian Minister, who is the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps.

The Imperial Club is run by the diplomats, and to stress its exclusiveness it has only two Abyssinians on its membership: the Emperor and the Foreign Minister. They are honorary members, but they never use the club.

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Mr. George was managing the party and stood behind the bar, while Mr. Cramp, his Vice-Consul, received the guests, who were either diplomats and their families or the Emperor's foreign advisers. They assembled punctually, happy to be able to think and talk about Europe, where they all longed to be at that very moment.

Lady Barton, the British Minister's wife, is the leading light in this society. She is the most popular European woman in all Addis Ababa and is a personal friend of the Empress, who has been taught a great deal by this charming and intelligent woman. Sir Sidney Barton and Miss Esmé Barton arrived later, as they had been watching the polo match that takes place once a week on the local race-course. The club terraces are now alive with people. In one corner a young English legation secretary is complaining that they cannot make up a polo team.

"We are forced to play our Bengalis," he said, meaning the Indian guards at the legation.

The new German Minister was introduced. He has a ticklish job, because no one understands the political situation that his Government have sent him to watch. Sir Sidney chatted with the French Minister, Monsieur Bodard, who is the best paid man in Addis Ababa. His salary is 80,000 talers a year, or £5,100, which, for Abyssinia, is a colossal fortune. The Americans are paid worst, and Mr. Cramp, who gets the pay of an American army lieutenant, feels "awfully bad" in Addis Ababa.

As it grew dark the electric light, which is generated specially by the club's own plant, was turned on. The guests stood about in small groups. Bridge was in progress in one room; Sir Sidney read a four-weeks-old *Illustrated London News*, and the secretaries of the legations crowded round Miss Barton, who is the only young girl in the diplomatic circle, since her sister married the Italian Consul at Markos—Baron Muzzi. The gramophone played the latest American dance records, which Mr. George had just got the day before, and

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

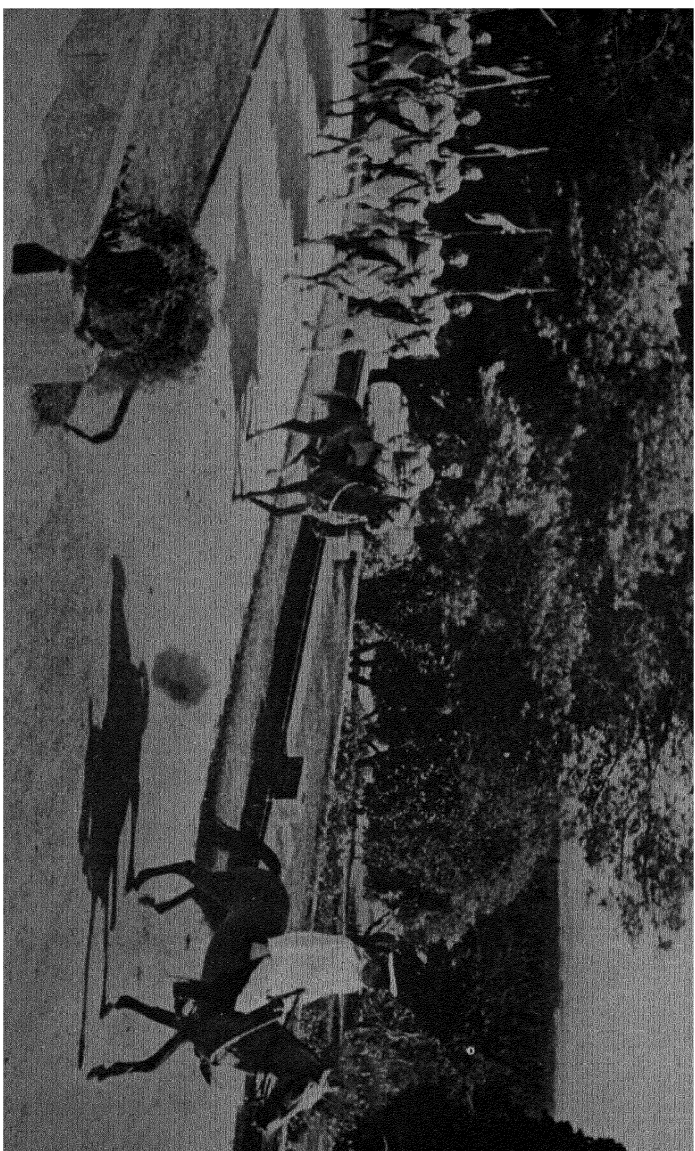
they had lost nothing of their shining newness on the eight weeks' journey. Black servants moved around serving American cocktails—French brandy, Italian vermouth, and Scotch whisky. Everyone felt happy because the cocktail party made them forget that they were in Addis Ababa.

Other Europeans live a simple life in a quarter of the town about three miles away from this "different world." None are liked by the Abyssinians, who think that the "Ferentshis," as they call the foreigners, have come for the sole purpose of wresting away their country.

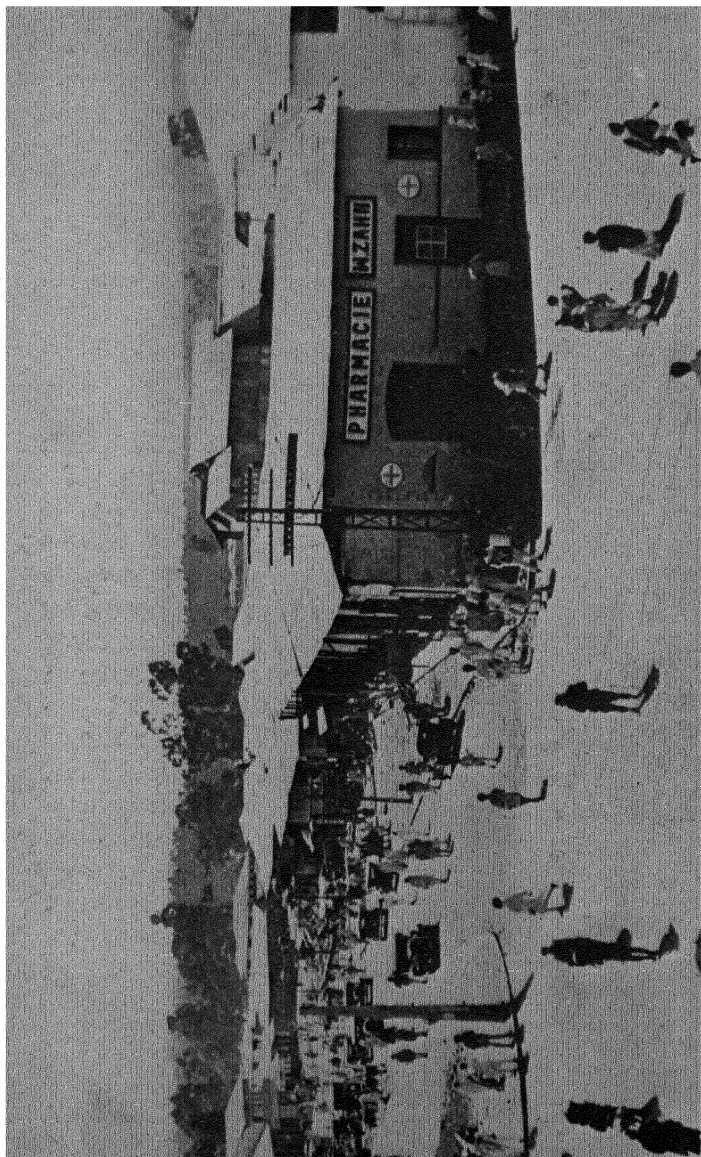
Very many of the Europeans are interesting and genuine people, but they can scarcely make both ends meet; the depression is more serious here than in Europe or America, and they have the capriciousness of the rulers of Abyssinia, who look on the Europeans as highwaymen and robbers, to reckon with as well. The Abyssinians are one of the most polite peoples in the world, but their good manners are for the benefit of their compatriots, not of foreigners whom they look down on; even the lowest little black boy feels superior to a white woman.

But in spite of these differences white and black have to live and work along the same lines in close proximity, and it is only recently that the number of incidents has increased, and Europeans have had their windows knocked in and their children have had their bags snatched on their way from school. Occasionally more serious trouble is reported in the interior, but the Emperor takes immediate action and employs the death-penalty if Europeans are attacked, and foreigners are forbidden to go into the interior. This law was not passed to hide anything, but only as a preventive measure.

More serious than the differences between Abyssinian and European is the conflict among the whites themselves. The good elements in the European quarters are confronted with doubtful characters who have been driven to Abyssinia to escape arrest, or, in sheer despair, have "inflicted" themselves upon the country. These dregs of humanity have killed the



SIR SIDNEY BARTON RIDING TO THE PALACE AHEAD OF HIS BENGAL LANCERS



THE EUROPEAN QUARTER IN ADDIS ABABA

EUROPEANS IN ADDIS ABABA

European's good name, and they are to blame if the Abyssinian takes no notice of you in the street until you greet him first, if he mistrusts you, and is loath to take suggestions from serious Europeans, and is absolutely impossible to do business with.

There are doctors in Addis Ababa who assisted famous medical men in Europe but cannot get on here, and there are others who although they have never qualified are doing well, because they advertise themselves skilfully and wink their eye at treatment that no doctor with a conscience could allow. A young German doctor who had been an assistant at one of the largest hospitals in Germany, but had been crowded out of his country under the new régime, told me about his grievance.

"I am an eye specialist, a surgeon, and not the worst. I had already won a position for myself in Berlin, and came to Abyssinia because I knew that the people suffered from terrible ophthalmic diseases. At first I had plenty to do, and treated from thirty to fifty patients daily, getting the minimum fee, for I could not get as much as a taler from anyone below the rank of minister. Then a short time ago my patients suddenly stopped coming. I was astonished, because even my regular patients disappeared. Before very long I discovered the reason. A rival practitioner, who was not qualified and had lost many of his patients through me, had started a campaign against me, telling the natives: 'This Hakim says on his plate that he is an oculist. What kind of a doctor is that if he only cares for the eye. Come back to me! I can treat all parts of your body.'"

There is also a chemist in Addis Ababa who was travelling for a European shoe manufacturer only three years ago; and a solicitor who used to be a commission agent.

The good faith of the professions is also undermined by these charlatans, for the Abyssinians have no talent for professional work and allow the European invasion to exploit those fields (there is indeed only one solitary native doctor in the whole country), and they cannot produce a single

engineer, solicitor, or lawyer, not necessarily because they are incapable of following these professions; even if they could they would simply see no purpose in them. They are only interested in politics and the Government of the country. But the European professional men do not make the best of this golden opportunity by working hard, and if they have money and ambition when they first come to Addis Ababa they have lost it all before they leave.

The shopkeepers too have to combat with their fellow-countrymen's competition as well as the backwardness of the land. A shop was pointed out to me as the cheapest in the town. All the business people asked, "How can this man cut his prices so low?" until one day it was discovered that the owner of the shop was also a commission agent, and he was simply selling the samples that were sent him free of charge.

Many people try to find refuge from the town in the country, but it can offer them no advantages; treasure-hunters are disappointed there too, and the life is only tolerable to the man who is seeking loneliness with nature, and expects to get no more than the bare necessities of life out of the earth. There are a few such people and they are quite happy in Abyssinia, working on farms and plantations. Papa Götz is one of them. He is called the "Ferentshi of Arusi" and has lived for thirty-five years in this southern province. He became naturalised a long time ago, wears the native costume, —jodhpur breeches and a white shirt, with a shama thrown round him—and has married his daughter to a Mohammedan Somali. He has substituted for his European life that of the African native and he appears to be contented with his lot.

His is an unusual case, for the West Europeans cannot usually adapt themselves to Abyssinian conditions, and that is why so many of them founder. Only the Greeks and Armenians survive. They are to be found everywhere in town and country: far into the interior, over in Arabia, in the Sudan, Kenya Colony, in Palestine, in Syria—all over the Orient the Greeks and Armenians are at home. They do more than

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make good in these foreign lands; they seize for themselves, little by little, the key commercial positions, for they have three characteristics that make for success: they are modest; the Greeks and Armenians live just as miserably as the Abyssinians themselves, if not more so: they are adaptable, as I noticed myself when they threw themselves on the ground before the Emperor, more zealous to express their loyalty than his own subjects: and finally their keen business instinct borders on unscrupulousness. These are the essential qualities for doing business in North-East Africa and the Orient. What the rest of Europe will never achieve has already been done by these Greeks and Armenians. While they succeed in Abyssinia, the others experience nothing but disappointments.

Only primitive man can feel at ease in Abyssinia; for him the country fulfils his secret desires. Things are cheap, and one can live on a large scale and enjoy pleasures that are the privilege of the upper ten thousand only in Europe. In Addis Ababa, for example, a hairdresser owns a racing stable, and when she rides through the town she is accompanied by two mounted servants. In Europe she might have found difficulty in paying her tram fare. Her horses are good, and for her the race meetings are the life at its best. I watched her at the only meeting that took place while I was in Addis Ababa. The Emperor sat in the royal box, although I had heard from the Foreign Ministry that he was still ill; the diplomats and their wives occupied their official boxes, and the chief men of the country were wearing all their finery; but I was far more interested in the little hairdresser as she busied herself with the horses, proudly and confidently took her place in the grandstand and followed the racing with binoculars. She reminded me of the heroine of a sentimental film that I had seen somewhere or other. These adventures are only possible in American films and in Abyssinia.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH WITH TWO MILLION PRIESTS

I HAD made some friends among the Abyssinians since my arrival and they spoke just as badly of the Foreign Office as I did. The Mayor of Addis Ababa, Blatta Taklu, my most influential friend, promised to help me, and this promise materialised. At six o'clock one morning I was wakened by his interpreter, a French-speaking Abyssinian, with a message:

"Blatta Taklu wants you to know that the Emperor is going to drive to the Feast of St. George to-day. Perhaps you would be interested to see this Abyssinian ecclesiastical celebration, and he has sent me to take you there."

"Thank you," I answered, still half asleep; "but why is it necessary to be called out of bed at six o'clock?"

"Because the service has already begun and the Emperor is praying with his subjects."

It was not difficult to find the way, for the street leading to the Coptic Church was crowded with people who wanted to see the Emperor. They had waited since midnight to see him for a split second as he drove past in his motor, and were now squatting there till noon, when he would return. When we arrived prayers were still being said in the church and we had to wait outside. Not that I minded, for the courtyard in front of the building offered us a scene that was surely more interesting than what was going on inside. Some 2,000 of the Imperial military bodyguard sat about, back to back, while others lay and squatted. On one side monks stood playing weird instruments that looked rather like violins and made a

THE CHURCH WITH TWO MILLION PRIESTS

monotonous sound. At the top of the church steps which continued right round the building hung a white curtain, and a costly carpet had been laid down for the Emperor when he came out. In the background the people were collecting in thick masses, and all the while the priests chanted on, scarcely audible above the din of the crowd. Now I was seeing the real Abyssinians, an ancient immutable race.

Suddenly a wave of movement swept across the crowd. The warriors stood up, and as the monks came into the middle of the square, the people tried to break through the police cordon. The priests had appeared at the church door, dressed in blazing vestments of heavy brocade, the bishops wearing crowns of rich gold. Two gaunt monks moved forward, carrying on their heads the ten commandments, hidden from the defiling eye of man with stiff silk coverings. In the midst of this gorgeous motley group I saw one man dressed in plain black. He was Abuna Kyrillos, the head of the Coptic Church. The bishops were leaning on their staffs, and the monks squatted on the ground but the monks who were carrying the ten commandments remained standing, their eyes shining, mysterious and fanatical, as they bore their sacred burden. The high dignitaries of the land began to leave the church, bowing down before the Emperor's box that was erected at the top of the steps outside the entrance. After some time the heavy white curtain swayed; people were moving behind it, although it was impossible to see who they were. My guide whispered to me that the Emperor had already arrived but he had to be shielded from the eyes of the Evil One. Then suddenly the curtain dropped. The people saw their Emperor in the flesh, and every man in the crowd collected in the square, from ministers and bishops to warriors and beggars, called out with one voice: "Habet, Habet!" Little Father, Little Father! I bowed to the ground and the Emperor acknowledged my gesture with a friendly smile, for he knew already who I was and I learned later that I had been invited to the festival at his special command.

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Then the service in the square took place. The monks played sing-song psalms of the Coptic Church on their stringed instruments and others performed sacred dances. The music grew wilder, the drums beat louder and the dancing monks whirled in more extravagant ecstasy. Everyone was moving to the rhythm of the thundering drums, while the Emperor, majestically calm, stood quite unmoved by it all.

The dance over, the sacred procession started to go round the church three times. At the head walked the priests, followed by the Emperor, carrying his rifle over his shoulder, a special honour which he renders only to God, for on no other occasion does an Abyssinian nobleman carry arms. The Emperor's numerous servants attend him and before God he is himself only a servant. His rifle is now not covered because the Devil is crushed out when God is present, but as soon as the procession leaves the vicinity of the church the costly weapon is wrapped up in silk, out of sight of the Evil One.

As the Emperor went past I noticed that he was strikingly pale, and the mayor's interpreter confirmed my impression.

"His Majesty is tired out," he told me, "he rose at three o'clock this morning to finish some State business before the Church festival."

The Church of Abyssinia holds a great number of festivals, and the one that I witnessed was repeated at the end of each month. Most of them begin at dawn and last all day. The powerful princes of the Church take the greatest pains to insure that the Emperor always arrives punctually, and woe betide him if he leaves before the end! In many respects he is the Church's prisoner, for the Church is the real ruler of the country. The Emperor's organisation for governing the State is handicapped by the inadequate means of communication. The 30,000 regular soldiers that he commands and pays out of his own pocket are his only opposition against the "army" of the Church, whose ranks are filled by monks. Every fourth Abyssinian belongs to the priesthood, which numbers more than 2,000,000. The Emperor's power does



ETHIOPIAN PRIESTS CARRYING THE TABLETS OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



THE DOOR OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES IN ADDIS ABABA CATHEDRAL

THE CHURCH WITH TWO MILLION PRIESTS

not extend beyond the range of his machine-guns, and in many villages the inhabitants think that the Emperor Menelik is still reigning in the capital. But the Church holds sway over the whole land by means of its churches, which are to be found in even the smallest hamlets.

The history of this country is really a history of its Church, which was converted to Christianity in the fourth century A.D. till when it had been half pagan, half Jewish. In biblical times Menelik I. governed the land, and then dim periods followed when great wars and smaller battles shook the country from end to end, while the Church stood firm in the background, threatening and threatened. At one time Mohammedans and another time a Jewish dynasty were able to conquer the land, but the power of the Coptic Church always dominated in the end. In 1500 Abyssinia was broken up into several independent States and for over three hundred years the Kings of Shoa, Tigre, and Amhara fought for supreme sovereignty, until in 1869 the English sent a punitive expedition under Sir Robert Napier against King Theodor of Amhara, who had imprisoned members of a British mission. The expedition wiped out the black army at Magdala, and when King Theodor saw that all was lost, he and his son committed suicide. The people, freed from the tyrannical and blood-thirsty Theodor, welcomed the English enthusiastically. King John of Tigre was given the throne of Amhara and on his death in 1889 the country was finally united by his successor, the King of Shoa, who ruled as Menelik II.

The Abyssinians thus became a nation but they could not yet live peaceably, and in 1895 the Italians saw their opportunity and sent a military force against the Emperor. But the nation was already strong enough to resist invasion and the first Italo-Abyssinian war ended in the defeat of the Italians by Menelik's fearless warriors at Aduwa on 1st March, 1896. The Italians had not the means to continue a colonial war that was proving difficult, and the Emperor was able to dictate his terms in the Treaty of Addis Ababa that was signed in October

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of the same year. The Italians had to give up all their plans for expansion in North-East Africa and retreat to their old frontier of Eritrea, defined by the Treaty of Uthalli. By this treaty the Genoese shipowners were allowed to buy 670 miles of land along the coast of the Red Sea for 1,000,000 talers. The Abyssinians of to-day are convinced that this was the one great mistake that Menelik made during his long reign, for he had not only deprived his country of its only exit to the sea but—and this was worse—he had laid himself open to foreign attack. In all other respects they regard the dead Emperor as a national Saint. He certainly introduced, on the advice of his counsellor, Alfred Ilg, a Swiss engineer, many reforms that were long overdue.

When Menelik died, in 1911, he was so beloved that nobody dared to tell the people, and for three years his death was kept secret. Once when the country grew suspicious, the ministers showed them at the window of the palace an old man who resembled the Emperor, to reassure them, but the time came when his passing could no longer be concealed, and Menelik's grandson, Prince Lidj Yassu, took over the Government.

The interlude when Lidj Yassu ruled is one of Abyssinia's most interesting periods. This much hated prince disappeared twenty years ago, but he has become a legendary spirit who is only spoken of in a whisper, and when I was collecting material about his strange reign it was no easy task to sift out the truth from the many contradictory stories that I heard.

As Emperor Menelik had no son he had named as his successor Lidj Yassu, the son of his daughter who had married Negus Michael, a native chief. The young boy lead the easy life of royal children, playing in the wide courtyard of the Gibbi Palace with his friend, Tafari Makonnen, the son of the powerful Governor of Harar. On the death of Menelik a plot was hatched by Ras Makonnen the Governor of Harar and Fitorari Habte Georgis the War Minister and another to keep Lidj Yassu from the throne. Lidj Yassu had himself no cut and dried plan for keeping the holy throne of Menelik.

THE CHURCH WITH TWO MILLION PRIESTS

But he wanted to break away from the domination of the Church, and he took the Mohammedans into his confidence. During the Great War they advised him to embark on a reckless scheme for taking part in the "holy" war that the Turkish Sultan had declared as Calif, by sending reinforcements of Abyssinian soldiers to the Germans who were then fighting under the command of General Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa.

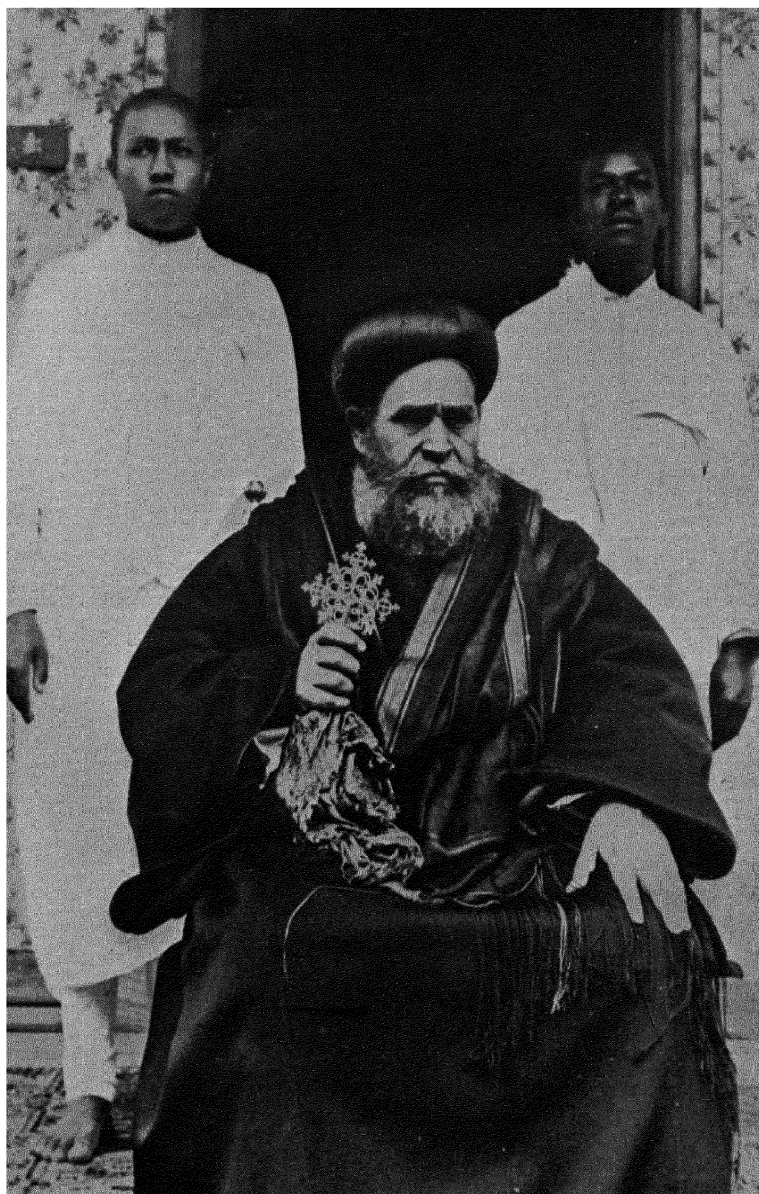
This happened in 1916 and in the same year Colonel Lawrence paid a most interesting and profitable visit to Abyssinia for a few weeks. His visit probably accelerated the fall of Lidj Yassu. He knew that this young king had a predilection for Arabian dress, and he knew that a ruler with Mohammedan sympathies would never be tolerated on the Abyssinian throne. So it came about that Lidj Yassu was photographed in Gibbi when he was surrounded by his Arabian favourites wearing Mohammedan costume, and prints were made of this photograph in Khartoum and distributed in hundreds of thousands among the people. The result was that Yassu had to fly to Harar and while he was enlisting Mohammedan troops there he was told that he had forfeited his throne. His mother's sister, Zauditu, daughter of Menelik, had been crowned Empress, and Ras Tafari, his former playfellow, the son of Ras Makonnen, had been made Prince Regent and heir to the throne. Yassu put up some resistance but he was defeated and taken prisoner by Ras Tafari at Sagalba and given over to Ras Kassa bound in gold chains.

Zauditu was Empress but it was the clever Ras Tafari who ruled the land, and when she suddenly died he had achieved his aim. He became king as Haile Selassie II when he was thirty-eight, and in 1930 he was given the greater honour of Emperor as Haile Selassie I. He is Negus Negesti, the King of Kings. He also styles himself the Lion of Judah, because Menelik in his time traced his descendants back as far as King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. He has no right to this

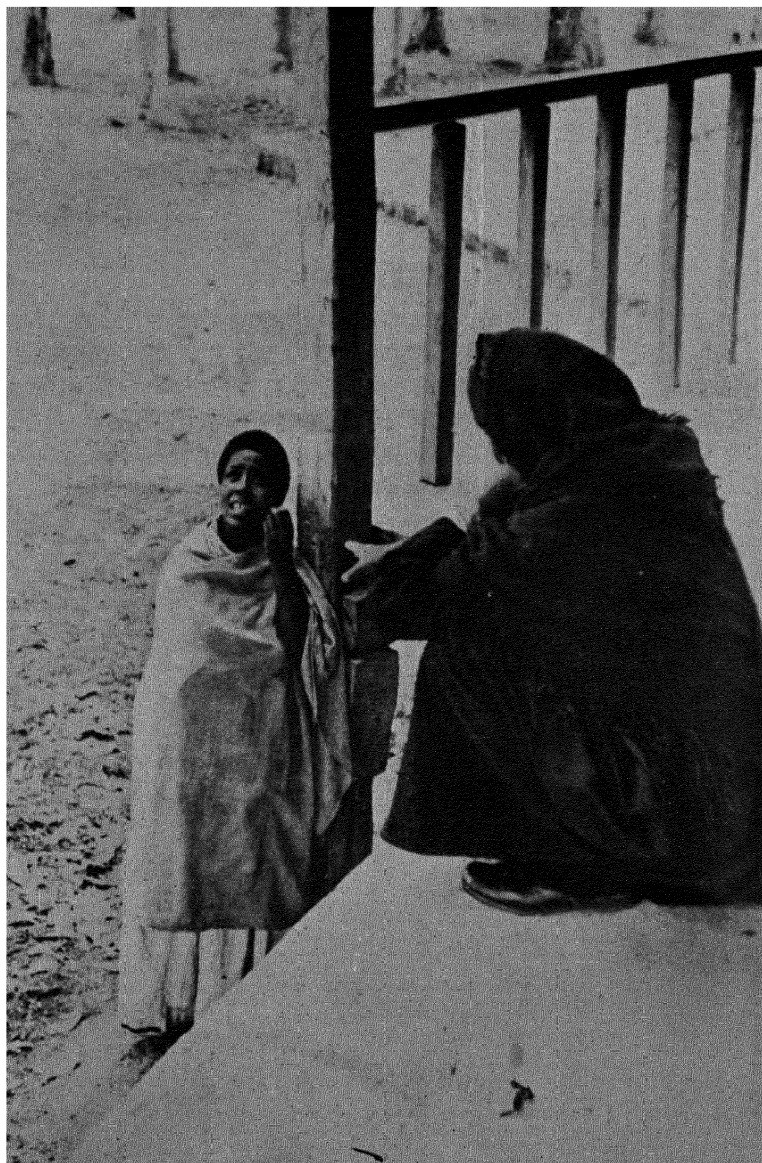
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title, therefore, as the Church upholds the legend, he is under yet another obligation to the priests.

The first man of the country after the Emperor is the Abuna. This important post is under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Cairo and so far has always been filled by an Egyptian monk of the Coptic Church, and never an Abyssinian. The former Abuna, Mathias, was a clever politician who understood how to keep the State and Church interests balanced, but the present head of the Church, Kyrillos, is a man of peace who spends most of his time in his palace surrounded by his old ecclesiastical books. His priests carry out the political activities of the Church under the rule of Abu Hanon, the Bishop of Harar, and it is they who hinder the Emperor's reforms. These churchmen have the masses in the hollow of their hands and know how to juggle with public opinion. The Emperor has often to give up radical reform plans for fear of straining his relations with the Church. The Church is now playing a particularly important part by trying to force the Empire to declare war, but Haile Selassie is standing firm and will remain a pacifist as long as he possibly can. It is not uninteresting, if one knows the country, to recognise the symptoms of revolution in the midst of imminent war against a foreign foe.



ABUNA KYRILLOS, HEAD OF THE COPTIC CHURCH IN ABYSSINIA



A SUPPLICANT BEFORE THE ABUNA KYRILLOS

CHAPTER VIII

POISON AND ARGUMENTS—ABERRATIONS OF ABYSSINIAN POLITICS

To get back to the festival—the Emperor had now returned to his box at the top of the church steps, and the white curtain was hung up again. His big black car drove forward, a white awning was held up and beneath it he hurried down the steps, jumped into the car, and drove away while runners cleared a passage through the crowd. After his departure the gawdy display was a monotonous affair which seemed to please the performers only, for the people ran after the Imperial car and we were left alone with the praying priests.

My interpreter met a friend and talked to him in Amharic, so I stood aside, but even so I could not help recognising from the shifty glances that they shot in my direction that they were discussing me. Soon they approached and the stranger made a low bow and shook hands.

“My name is Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra, Director of Education,” he said, “and I have been commanded by His Majesty to be your guide and to help you in every possible way.” So I had at last got my permit! But—and it was a big but—Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra would follow my every step, for he was responsible to the Emperor for my actions and would lose his position if I wrote any anti-Abyssinian reports while I was under his care.

As we walked away to luncheon I asked him whether he was related to the mayor who was also called Blatta, but he explained that Blatta is not a name but a title, meaning “wise.”

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It is only a civil title ranking one higher than Ato, which corresponds to mister in English.

The next highest title is Kantiba, the equivalent of an English knight, and the most honourable is the fourth, Belatin Geta, which means All Wisest. In the army they have not so many ranks as we have in Europe. The Balambaras, or captain, is the lowest officer's rank; then comes the Fitorari, or major; the Kenjazmatch which literally means "the man commanding the right wing," and corresponds to lieutenant-colonel; and Dedjazmatch, "the man commanding the left wing," is the equivalent of colonel. The highest command is Ras, or general.

Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra was a young man in the early thirties. He has never been in Europe, but he had made up for that by spending many years in North Africa, especially in the Italian colonies. He was a cultured, self-educated man, speaking perfect French and Italian. He moved in the Emperor's confidential circle, but even so it was unusual for such a young man to have the title of "Blatta," especially if one remembers that he was a Tigre, a race that is only grudgingly allowed promotion. ✓

"I was detailed for a troublesome post in a part of the interior," he told me, "that had not been entirely subjected, and I was given the distinction of Blatta before my departure to impress the simple natives there. But at the last minute my appointment was cancelled, and as they could not rescind my honour, I remained the youngest Blatta in the country, and, believe me, I should be very happy to give it up, for it has only brought me jealous enemies. The aristocratic hierarchy is worse here than in any other part of the world."

Until 1907, when Menelik founded the first government, there were only three men who ranked as minister, but now Abyssinia has nearly as many State departments as England, although they are only a shadow organisation, with which the Emperor is anything but satisfied. Talent is not of much

POISON AND ARGUMENTS—ABYSSINIAN POLITICS

use in Abyssinia; you need to know all the secrets, for it is the people in the know who are the actors in this strange drama of the past; it is they who become the ministers. Most of them are conservative to the bone, and although they are far behind the times, naïve and uncultured, they know "too much" and are not easy to get rid of. Moreover, they are unscrupulous enough to betray their Emperor and country as soon as they hear the jingle of money, and I was told of an important provincial governor in the pay of Italy, who used to say when he thought he was safe from cavedroppers: "Rather the Italians than this newfangling Emperor!" But he was not quite cautious enough, and the Emperor soon heard and exiled him.

The Emperor listens to his counsellors' advice, but he is liable to do the very opposite of what they recommend. The Minister of Education gave me an instance of what happened when Haile Selassie I wanted to build schools.

"What do you want with schools, Dshanhoi? I did not go to school, but in spite of that I have become a minister!"

The Emperor heard him out patiently, and then ordered the building to be started.

A great deal of money is spent on the erection and furnishing of public buildings, but still more finds its way into the pockets of the officials, who make the biggest profits out of the Emperor's modern decrees.

I wanted to see a typical Abyssinian school, and I was taken to a courtyard and shown four stark half-finished walls. "That is typically Abyssinian," my guide told me. "This school would have been ready years ago, if the ministers had not sabotaged the Emperor's work. When the Minister of Education wants to resume building, the Treasury has no money; if the Treasury is agreeable then the Office of Works raises some objection. In fact, the ministers hinder the Emperor at every turn."

The twenty ministers or so that Abyssinia possesses are only ornaments, and grow more silent as the Emperor's central

political power increases. The position to-day and in Menelik's time has been reversed; the old Emperor ruled a united land but had no time to govern it, while Haile Selassie tries to govern, but has to overcome the problems of an Empire that might break up. Now everything devolves on him. His chief difficulty at first was the numerous enemies, usually the chieftains of provinces which had been kept in check by Menelik, who seized their chance, when Ras Tafari came to the throne, to regain their independence. The Emperor had to fight these chieftains, to get the taxes that the natives were paying to them, instead of into the Imperial purse.

Before he could get his country represented on the League of Nations, Haile Selassie had to stamp out the slave traffic, and to do this he had to curb the native chiefs, and, of course, they resisted tooth and nail any plan that concerned the freedom of their little oligarchies.

Abyssinia is now labouring through the period of upheaval that Europe went through long ago. Revolution is in the air, but it is a unique revolution that is not being plotted by the workers, but by the Emperor himself, who stands at the head of the youth against the elder generation. Abyssinian politics are a mass of intrigues. The Conservative wing would like to remove the Emperor, but nobody comes out into the open. Opinions are only expressed through third parties. Political assassinations such as we have in Europe are unknown, but if arguments do not convince, the poison of a kind of cactus indigenous in this land, is employed. A supper invitation is sent out and the highly seasoned dishes that are set before the guest contain the necessary potion, which works slowly but surely, and in four weeks' time there is one less opponent in the Government. The Emperor knows these tricks, and employs a highly-paid Swiss cook, who must partake of all food sent to his table. When he goes into the country he is escorted by armoured cars. He is civilised enough to know fear, and he protects himself in European style, taking detectives with

him wherever he goes; but in spite of these precautions, up to a few years ago plots were a daily occurrence.

One of the most serious was hatched by Ras Hailu, the richest man in Abyssinia. He was one of the petty kings, and a dangerous character, who oppressed and exploited his subjects, dealt in slaves and other hazardous goods on the sly, and, because he owned wide possessions, came into the sharpest conflict with the Emperor, whom he wanted to finish with a decisive blow. His plan was simple. The whole story reads like a fairy-tale of the middle-ages, and it is difficult to believe that it took place just three years ago. He wanted to liberate Lidj Yassu with the help of his warriors, and by driving out the Emperor, make an end of European influences. Ras Kassa, who was still keeping Lidj Yassu prisoner on his estate in Fitché, set out with all his servants and warriors to Addis Ababa to attend the marriage celebrations of the Crown Prince, and while he was there Ras Hailu arrived in Fitché, and was able to smuggle Lidj Yassu out of prison in a woman's dress. Then he and his followers marched towards Addis Ababa. Swift runners had in the meantime brought news of the outrage to the capital, and Ras Kassa, whose head depended on his safe-keeping of the Prince, left the capital immediately and went out to meet the forces of Ras Hailu and Lidj Yassu. In three days' time the revolt was at an end. Hailu's followers saw the hopelessness of their position and deserted Yassu's camp and went over to Ras Kassa. The two rebel leaders were left alone, and after an exciting chase, they were taken prisoner. The Emperor summoned the criminal court and twenty revolutionaries were condemned to death one after another, and were hanged on the trees of the four main roads outside Addis Ababa. Ras Hailu was also sentenced to the same penalty, but the Emperor was merciful, and sent him instead to the terrible prison island on Lake Zwai, where he lies in fetters to this day; his sons were banished and all his property confiscated. Everything that he possessed now belongs to the Emperor, except the prisoner's banking account which is

lodged in a Swiss bank, and is said to exceed £1,000,000. No kind of coercion could make him give that up to the Emperor.

So ended the most serious revolt that Haile Selassie had to suppress. Much less anxiety was caused by the rebellion of a provincial chief, Dedjazmatch Baltcha, of Aduwa fame, who suddenly appeared before Addis Ababa with 2,000 soldiers, and having pitched camp, announced his terms of retreat to the Emperor, who was ready enough to treat with the rebel, and asked him to come to his palace. Baltcha stipulated that his officers should escort him and the Emperor agreed. No sooner had Baltcha and his officers left the camp than messengers, sent out by the Emperor, addressed the rebel ranks :

“You do not know what you are trying to do, revolting against the Emperor! He is strong enough to conquer you, and then heaven alone can help you! But this time he will be benevolent, and if you go home, he will forgive you and, in addition, supply each of you with a taler for your journey.”

Baltcha achieved nothing in the palace, and when he reached his camp he found it empty of soldiers. They had learned their lesson, and with the Emperor's talers, had taken to their heels. Baltcha tried to escape too, but the Emperor's mounted men caught him and the criminal court was summoned again and justice was dealt out. The rebel's land was seized and he himself was sent to one of the many prison islands, where he was left for two years. Then he wrote a letter of repentance to the Emperor, who recognised that he could not afford to lose a reformed friend, and he pardoned him with the proviso that he disappeared from political life and withdraw to a monastery. Baltcha complied and, as a prince of the Church, has since proved himself a loyal subject.

Abyssinia had long forgotten Baltcha and his soldiers, and his deeds of valour at Aduwa had faded into the past, when he suddenly reappeared in Addis Ababa after the Wal-Wal

incident. He arrived alone, carrying his priest's staff in his hand and not one of the passers-by who greeted him suspiciously, thought for a moment that this was the monk, Baltcha. He was granted an audience without delay, and the Emperor was told that Dedjazmatch Baltcha had come to offer help.

"Dshanhoi, I am done with the past!" he said. "I have kept trust, and I do not see why I should ever break it. I heard of the attack on your soldiers at Afdam and Wal-Wal, as I worked in my cell, and I cannot stay shut up in my monastery when I know that they are going to battle. I fought by the side of Menelik at Aduwa, and I demand my place by you!"

The Emperor was touched, but he stood firm and replied:

"Thank you, Baltcha, for being prepared to die for your country. It was good of you to return in your old age to lead your men to war, but times have changed since Aduwa, and the war of to-day is no longer the war of Aduwa. It is no longer enough to have courage and patriotism; to-day tactics and strategy are required. Your place is here, Baltcha, I can make good use of you, and for the actual fighting I have younger generals."

Since that day the man who was formerly a revolutionary, has had the Emperor's full confidence, and this is not the only case of loyalty in modern Abyssinian history. Eight months ago tribal chiefs were fighting among each other and all turned against the Emperor, but now they are united against a common foe. A new generation exists that has grown up with the Emperor to which such men as Dedjazmatch Nassibu, Ras Imru and Wolde Georgis belong, and the last generation is exiled and decayed.

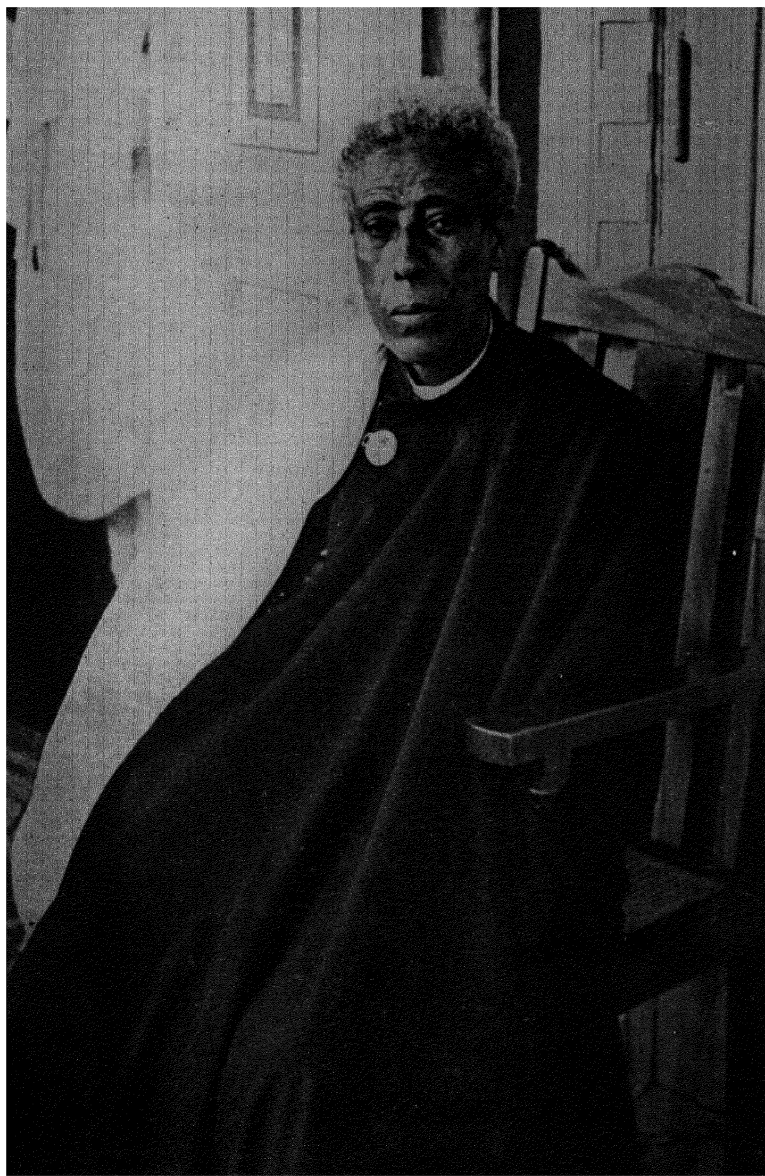
Ras Imru is, after the Emperor himself, the most interesting figure in Abyssinia. He is Governor of the province of Gojjam and lives in Gondar, the most northerly town in the Empire. He used to govern Harar and he was able to bring that recalcitrant province under the power of the Emperor. He learned the art of government in France, and

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

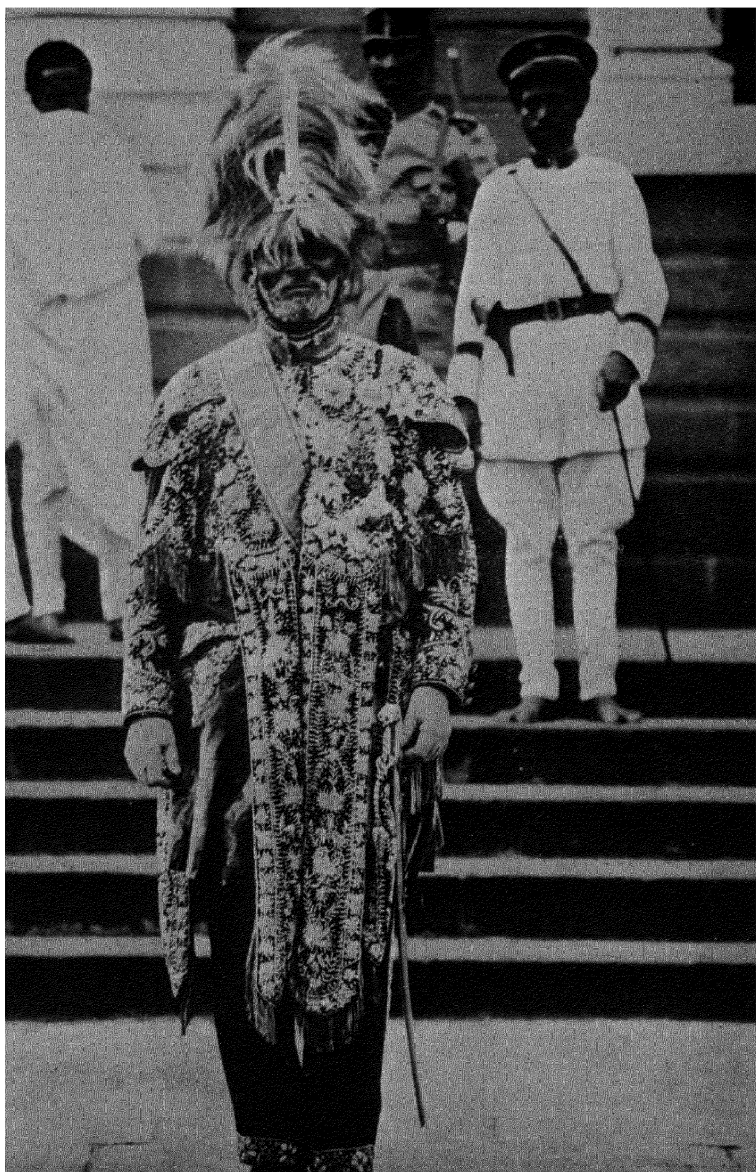
has built up his staff on French lines. I was told with bated breath that when this Ras Imru was transferred from Harar to Gondar, he left behind all his officials and started afresh in his new post. This was quite unheard of in Abyssinia, for when governors changed their posts they always took all their employees with them and the province was left in complete chaos. Ras Imru repeated this feat of staff building in Gondar, and it is thought that he will soon be transferred to the Province of Tigre, where there is still a great deal for him to do. This brilliant young man speaks French like a Frenchman, and perhaps because he can pick out the sheep and the goats among them, is the only Abyssinian who esteems the Europeans.

Wolde Georgis, the Emperor's private secretary, an important official who has to carry the responsibility of whole ministries on his shoulders, was formerly in charge of the Foreign Office, and his youth is the only reason for his not being a full-blown minister. He works even harder than his master, starting at three in the morning and not stopping till midnight. He enjoys no holiday on Sundays or other feast days, and often he is wakened out of his short sleep when the Emperor wants an order carried out during the night.

"At last we have reached the point," said Wolde Georgis, "when we have officials who have the ability to govern the country in the European method, instead of oligarchies. I am convinced that we shall now develop more rapidly, but we must be left alone, for all our efforts would be wasted if we fell back on the old ways, even if it were in defence of our very life and independence. On that day our evolution would stop, and a bloody revolution would take place. And the men who take it upon themselves to make a European country out of this backward African Empire, will be the first martyrs in the revolution, for the Conservatives rule the country, and conservative here means backward and pitiless. We of the younger generation are the friends of progress and



DEDJAZMATCH BALTCHA



RAS MULU GETA, MINISTER FOR WAR

POISON AND ARGUMENTS—ABYSSINIAN POLITICS

humanism, while they are its enemies! And we do not want to work in vain!"

That is another reason for the young Abyssinians shedding their blood to the last drop: they are not only protecting their country, but also their work that they began less than ten years ago and have carried out with their own strength and initiative.

CHAPTER IX

GIBBI, THE STRONGHOLD OF THE EMPEROR

THE theatre of these interesting and exciting intrigues is the Gibbi in Addis Ababa. Gibbi is on a hill in Amharic, and the town is ruled from this hill, which was a bare mound with a few dessicated eucalyptus trees growing on it, before Emperor Menelik built the first house there high above the zinc roofs of the town. Gibbi increased correspondingly with the Emperor's power, small palaces were erected instead of the houses, and wide courtyards were planned until it became a town within a town.

By command of the Emperor I was brought to Gibbi by an official of the Imperial Household. Our car drove under triumphal arches which—perhaps I ought not to give this away, but it is an important point in this story—were made of cardboard. But it must at any rate have been very good cardboard, for the arches were put up in 1930, in connection with the coronation, and they are only torn in a few places. The street was lined with Abyssinians wrapped in their white shamas, waiting for the Emperor. At the palace gate a section of the Imperial Guard welcomed us and soldiers presented arms, some of which were certainly as old as 1870. The soldiers were brisk and very young, one a child of about ten or twelve.

Hundreds of Abyssinians surrounded us as we approached the entrance, in the vain hope of getting inside along with the car, but the guard rushed up and cleared a way for us with their hippopotamus whips. The great doors opened and we

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drove through the first of the three courtyards that surround the palace. It was crowded with servants and soldiers of great gentlemen who were waiting to be received by the Emperor, in the hall, above which the green, gold and red flag of Abyssinia flapped in the breeze. No aristocrat ever thinks of going about in this country unaccompanied by servants and warriors, and the more important he is, the larger is his escort. Sometimes only two servants follow the mule of a gentleman, but 15,000 is not unusual.

The scene reminded me of the numerous little courtyards of the old Serailles in Stamboul where I once stayed. There were small palaces here, too, and I was conscious of the same atmosphere of an all-powerful monarch. But, whereas the labyrinth of the Serailles was now still, the Sultans dead, and their sons in exile, here there was plenty of life and tremendous activity. I could scarcely believe that anything like this was possible to-day, and imagined that I was in a film studio, and that the servants who squatted all over the yard, were supers who would get their pay that evening and drive home in a 'bus.

We passed through the second door, where we were again held up, and finally were standing before the third and last gate. The national flag was flying above it, and we were received by a man wearing a tail-coat under his shama. After much to-do he let the car through and we drove into the third courtyard that was almost empty but for two ranks of soldiers standing with fixed bayonets with their backs to the palace, and the two rows of cages that housed the lions of His Imperial Majesty. The lions roared in their cages and pounded the iron bars dangerously, as if seeking freedom. These lions, the mascots of the Emperor, emphasised the unique atmosphere of the palace; and the cubs that played in the open, the two lions sleeping before the entrance to the throne room, and the mighty buffalo that appeared suddenly as if out of the ground, completed the strangeness of the scene.

At the top of the steps that lead to the palace stood His

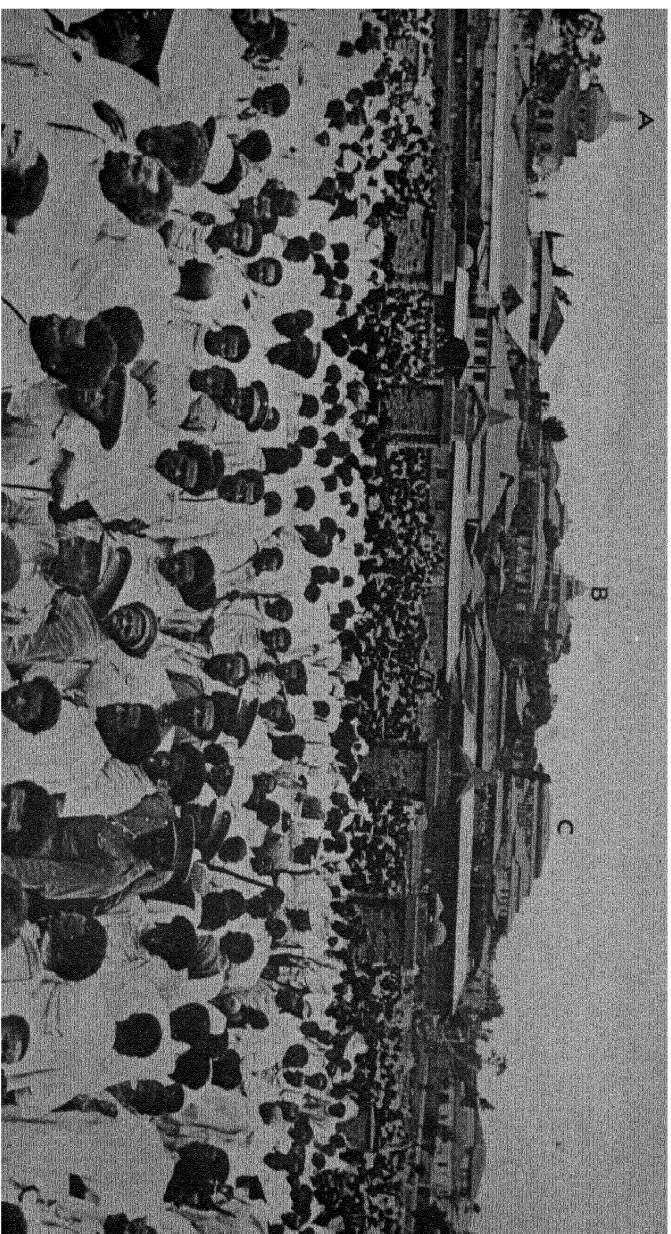
ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

Excellency, the Minister of the Household, who can only speak Amharic, and did not say a word of that while I was there. He bowed, and without a sound showed us the way with his right hand. Rich Persian carpets deadened the noise of our footsteps, and the doors of the gigantic banquet hall were opened by two tall servants. It was dark until mute lackeys drew aside the curtains. At the far end of the hall a magnificent baldaquin glittered in the light, and I was again reminded of the Sultan. Under it was the broad divan on which the Emperor reclined when he ate. In sharp contrast with the gorgeous throne, rough kitchen cupboards, turned out by the dozen in Europe and jobbed off to Abyssinia, stood along the sides of the room. But when the minister opened them, we were blinded by the golden plate inside.

The minister beckoned us silently on. As we approached the next door our Abyssinian escorts held their breath, tip-toing along with awed steps, and when the black servants opened it, we stood stockstill. The throne room in all its oriental splendour stretched out before us.

There are other throne rooms in other countries, which may not be occupied so frequently by their kings, but which nevertheless express with marble, silk and candelabras, the dignity of the land, but this one stands out as the last in past and present history that represents unrestricted Imperial power. It is the throne room of the *Arabian Nights*.

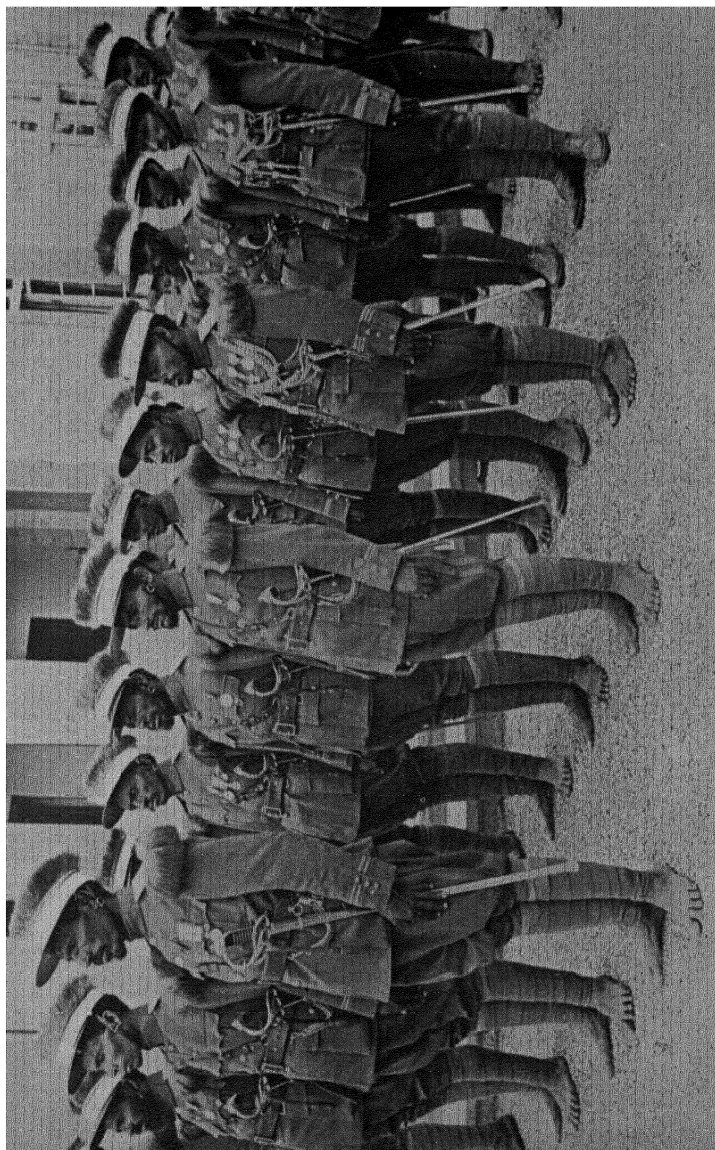
The throne itself has direct communication with the corridor outside, and is a kind of room within a room. It rests on four heavy columns and is upholstered in fine silk. The light shines on the gold pillars that support the roof, and the whole room is given a mellow magnificence by the valuable Persian carpets that hang on the walls and lie two or three deep on the floor. Two rows of gold chairs had been arranged for the representatives and visitors from foreign lands, bringing presents or greetings from the heads of their states to the scion of Solomon. In a corner hangs the only picture in the room. It is a huge original drawing for the special stamp that was



A. Menelik's Tomb.

GIBBI. CROWDS IN THE FIRST COURT
B. Emperor's Observation Tower.

C. Audience Hall.



THE IMPERIAL GUARD

GIBBI, THE STRONGHOLD OF THE EMPEROR

issued when the Emperor was crowned, and although it is rather a curious decoration for a throne room, it goes well with the mixture of styles here.

I was not to see the Emperor in his great palace. The wide ornamented halls resounded empty, for His Majesty does not feel happy in the home of his ancestors, and lives five miles away in a new house. The minister was standing at the door, a sign that we had been shown enough of the visible splendour of the Imperial power. He left us at the head of the stairway and he bowed low as our car drove off between the soldiers and lions.

Ten minutes later we had arrived at the new palace where the Emperor was living. The guard presented arms.

The modern design of the building was a strange contrast with the feudal pomp of Gibbi. It stands in the middle of a big, well-kept garden, and the fresh grey of the stone harmonises with the red and yellow flowers. This garden is the mania of its owner, and in a country where fresh water costs more than beer, only an Emperor can afford to have a garden full of flowers. Two hundred men fetch water from distant springs every day, marching in procession carrying vessels on their heads. The palace is like an English country house; it is only seven months old, and was put up in record time for the Swedish Crown Prince's visit. While it was being built, the Emperor came every day to watch its progress, and the foundation-stone was laid according to Abyssinian custom. First the Emperor, followed by his ministers, and then every man, woman and child of the population brought a brick in their hands, as contribution to the new building, and seven months later it was finished. More than 800 workmen were used under the direction of European architects. As the Europeans only got paid, the high ideals of the natives wore thin and one day they collected in front of the new palace and shouted in chorus: "Habet! Habet! We would like to be paid our wages too!" The Minister of the Household answered them from the terrace that had just been finished:

"The Dshanhoi will speak to you. Go round to the back of the castle!" And as they all went to the back and waited on their Emperor with smiling faces, he drove out of the front entrance, away to his old palace.

In spite of this interlude the building was finished to time, except for the installation of the electric lighting. When the Swedish Crown Prince's special train steamed into Addis Ababa workmen were still feverishly at work on this, and whenever the Crown Prince went out to a reception or to see the town, the electricians reappeared to continue with their half-finished work!

Even when I arrived the building was not completed, but the Emperor was living in it, and his presence made the rooms pulsate with life. Ato Asfou, the Emperor's major-domo, conducted me through the house.

In the spacious hall I noticed black lackeys in red and green with patent leather shoes, breeches and white stockings. They were big fellows, but not so big as the elephants' tusks that decorated the room. Signed photographs of the rulers of Europe stood on small tables, and I was especially interested to discover, in a prominent position, one of the King of Italy. The palace is furnished with English furniture and the decoration has been tastefully done, avoiding harsh colours. Brown is the prevailing tone, except in the Empress's Chinese bedroom, which has a blue-green colour scheme. Lidj Asfou told me with pride that the decoration of the whole house had cost 600,000 talers (£50,000).

On the chimneypieces stand more photographs of European princes, and in a place of honour in the drawing-room, two of the King and Queen of England, and between them the beautiful silver cup brought by the Duke of Gloucester as a coronation present from his father. In the same room there is the only artistic mistake of the palace; the walls are papered in two different colours, because the English paper-hangers discovered after they had started that they had not ordered enough paper, and having no time to lose, as the Crown Prince

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of Sweden had already arrived, they had no alternative but to finish off with another pattern.

All the chairs and every article in the rooms are marked with the Imperial monogram in Amharic letters, and many of the furnishings are decorated with the Ethiopian lions. Everything comes from England, even the gold-embossed note-paper on the desk of the Emperor's small study. The chief study impressed me most of all. The desk at which the Emperor begins his work in the early hours of the morning stands in the middle. The walls are lined with bookshelves, housing a valuable library which consists principally of French books, with a good many English standard works; it is quite clear from the condition of the books that their owner has read most of them. I was interested to see that he had an almost complete collection of the Latin classics in the original, for he speaks the language fluently and is delighted when he can find anyone who can talk it with him. The small dining-room is nearby. It is furnished with none of the oriental grandeur of the banquet hall in the old palace, and the only point of difference between the chairs of the Emperor and Empress and the rest is that theirs are covered with red leather instead of blue.

The difference between the palaces of Menelik and Haile Selassie is most pronounced in the throne room of the new palace. It is modern-looking and cool, and is a symbol of the new practical outlook that is felt on every floor of the building. This state room has several galleries, including one for musicians, which give it the appearance of a ballroom rather than a throne room of the Emperor of Abyssinia. Two simple wooden armchairs stand at the north end of the room.

The only decoration on the walls is a shield of David. On the left I noticed two small square holes piercing the plaster, and on asking the major-domo what they were for, he led me next door and showed me two up-to-date sound-film apparatuses which projected into the throne room. I was present a little later when the Emperor showed us, first of all, scenes of native life and then a French talkie comedy. Both

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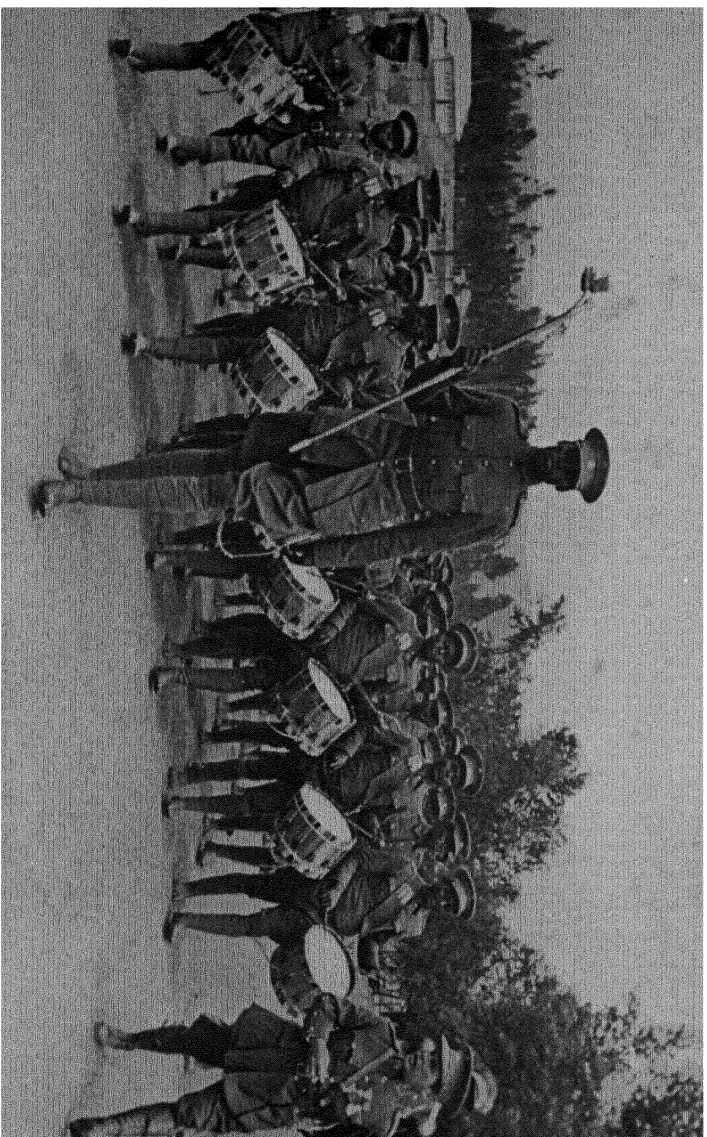
pictures and sound were first class. This will always be my most interesting visit to the cinema.

When the circular tour of inspection was over, Lidj Asfou took me back to the entrance hall where I was introduced to the commander of the officer's bodyguard, Balambaras Mukria, who appeared with a platoon of his guards to the strains of the Imperial band. What a difference there was between these disciplined, well-turned-out men and the shabby palace guard at Gibbi! They were in a new uniform with which they wore caps covered with lion's hair and puttees that ended abruptly at their bare feet. The members of these guards are all officers, and their commander, who has lately been promoted to the rank of a colonel, is also in charge of the Addis Ababa garrison.

The band, which consisted of about eighty men, was playing the Tafari March, the new national anthem, and was led by a drum-major who stood head and shoulders above anyone else. He was actually seven feet three inches tall, and it was amusing to see him beside the real leader of the band, a Swiss who was not quite six feet.

Until three years ago the Emperor still lived in the old palace where the reception rooms were magnificent, but the living quarters to say the least, primitive; there was no court etiquette, Europeans being ushered in wearing riding-boots, and the Emperor's life differed very little from the ordinary Abyssinian. But now the court of the Black Empire is modelled on European standards. It was the new English Minister, Sir Sidney Barton, who introduced the new style to Abyssinia. He himself respected what forms there were, and treated the Emperor like any other great ruler, and so it came about that this clever diplomat and charming gentleman quite unconsciously instructed the Emperor in social etiquette. To-day, morning coats must be worn at receptions in the day-time and dress-coats in the evening.

I had only a white dinner jacket and black trousers, and through the ignorance of the so-called tropical outfitter in



THE DRUM-MAJOR OF THE GUARDS' BAND. SWISS LEADER OF BAND ON RIGHT



THE EMPEROR IN THE IMPERIAL DINING-ROOM

GIBBI, THE STRONGHOLD OF THE EMPEROR

Berlin, I was now faced with an acute problem, for Lidj Asfou announced to me after the soldiers had marched off, and we were alone again, that my audience had been fixed for two days later. He notified me, politely but firmly, about the court etiquette, but when I took him into my confidence about the gaps in my wardrobe, he was ready with help.

"Fernandos will make you a morning coat in thirty-six hours. Sir Sidney Barton goes to him."

This remark showed me how much the English Minister influenced the Abyssinian court, for it is the servant not the master who decides these sartorial matters, and Sir Sidney was obviously the authority for this servant of the Emperor.

PART TWO

THE PEOPLE

CHAPTER X

AUDIENCE WITH THE LION OF JUDAH

AMIDST the thousands of screaming beggars, servants, parasites, soldiers, and lazy ministers, amidst decaying buildings and gorgeous gilded halls, the Emperor of Abyssinia leads a lonely life. He is the most hard-working citizen in the country, rising at 4 a.m. and receiving the first interviewers of the day an hour later. Whoever is in his service must be an early riser. My audience was to take place at nine o'clock in the morning, really a very early hour for such a reception, but the Emperor had already put five hours' work behind him, attending to very important State business, and seeing his ministers, by the time that others are getting out of bed.

I knew him quite well by this time. Although I had not met him personally, I heard much about him almost daily. And what I heard made it clear to me that there are two different Abyssinias. One an uncultivated, backward country, the Abyssinia of the past, that lives its life in the trackless bush ten or twelve thousand feet up; the other a modern Abyssinia personified by the Emperor. Nothing can happen without him: it would be true to say that he is the prime mover behind everything that takes place. He works for his country all the time, thinks and cares for its well-being, worries about, and is worried by its government.

Haile Selassie was born in Harar, but no one knows when, neither the *Almanach de Gotha* nor he himself, and when he is asked, his usual reply is: "I was born before Aduwa."

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When I asked his private secretary he answered with some hesitation: "His Majesty is *about* forty-five."

Haile Selassie looks younger than that: among Abyssinians he is considered a good-looking man; he is a living proof of the bitterly contested theory that the Amhara have no connection with negroes, for his skin is brown, like a sun-tanned European's. He has a prominent brow with small veins pulsating quickly under the thin skin, and his features are aristocratic and proud, but the predominating impression is sadness. The calm reflected in his face, is not the calm of peace, it tends rather to arouse anxiety and pity. It is the expression of a wise man who knows that he has to fight long odds and is not convinced of his success. It seems to say: "I have done my duty!" and his melancholy eyes seem to search his visitor for corroboration. His hands are particularly striking, and they have a lot to do, for the Emperor, like all Abyssinians, likes to gesticulate, and accompanies every story that he tells with lively movements of his hands, and he holds them but seldom under his black silk cape, or *kaba*, which is part of the nobleman's dress and is worn with the usual white *jodhpur* trousers. On special occasions, of course, he wears the gold-braided dress uniform of the Abyssinian warrior, or the new Field Marshal's uniform, but he does not work well in these warlike clothes, nor has he the figure of a fighter, for he is not more than five and a half feet tall. He is in fact a civilian Emperor.

I waited in the Emperor's library where I had glanced at the books two days before. The Emperor had to educate himself, and his knowledge is the result of natural ability rather than conventional study, for he lived through a disturbed childhood while his father, Ras Makonnen, was Governor of Harar. This town lies in the south-west, and being populated by fanatical Mohammedans, was a hard nut for the Abyssinians to crack. Ras Makonnen had to break down the resistance of these wild Hararis, and he succeeded because he was quite as bloodthirsty and fanatical as they were. He was

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also ambitious, and because he realised that he himself could not seize the throne, he wanted to ensure it at least for his family. So he plotted against Menelik's family, and his son was brought up in an atmosphere of intrigue. The young Tafari Makonnen, as the Emperor was called in his youth, was never treated as a child, and under strict guard behind the grim walls of the castle at Harar, was prepared for the throne. He was not to carry out Menelik's reforms, but he must become the inflexible Negus Negesti, the strength of his people, and the terror of the petty kings. But Tafari Makonnen only learned all this out of respect for his father, and he was done with intrigue the moment he reached his goal—the throne, and the getting of it must have been no frivolous adventure, for the road to a crown is strewn with fallen soldiers even when the pretender employs cunning rather than violence. He has changed since he succeeded to the throne. He used once to sleep on vermin-infested beds and eat raw meat with his hands, but he is now a complete monarch. The one failing in his government is that it lacks originality, for the Emperor rules according to a stereotyped model, and he will not vary his course to the left or right; but despite this inflexibility he seems to be great enough to be a ruler in deed as well as name. He is undoubtedly a talented monarch, but he would certainly achieve more if he could throw off once and for all the limitations imposed upon him. He looks tired and is obviously tormented by the recent difficulties of the political position which he alone understands, and the hopelessness of a war. He wants, above all, rest. He knows that he sits on a tottering throne, and he does not want to renounce the pleasures of life. Perhaps he dreams sometimes of a rich carefree ex-Emperor, who lives in an atmosphere of respect and peace, being addressed as "your majesty" by distinguished hotel proprietors, and sitting in the seat of honour at international tennis competitions, among white people who do not want to get anything out of him. That might well be the vision of the man who now occupies the

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throne of the Queen of Sheba. But he remains at his post, though a triple-engined aeroplane stands ready at his aerodrome to take him to Cairo; he has become a romantic personality, a Don Quixote, who has to fight the triple enemy—the Church, the petty kings, and now the Italians. It is not to be wondered at that he spends sleepless nights and buries himself in his work in the early morning.

The Emperor keeps his visitors waiting, and half an hour passed without anything happening. The library is in a corner of the new palace, with windows in three walls. On one side I watched troops being drilled by Belgian military instructors, and on another I suddenly saw the Emperor himself walking in the garden with two lion cubs. He went up and down, sunk in thought, and I followed him with my eyes until he went out of sight.

Haile Selassie entered unexpectedly, leaving his lions outside. I was told that he used never to show himself without lions because he thought they gave special emphasis to his power, and two full-grown animals always lay across the doorway of his old study. Once this led to a diplomatic dispute when the English Minister, who had come to see the Emperor, on being confronted by these wild beasts, drew his revolver and shot them down. Then he went in to Haile Selassie who was highly indignant, but the Minister told him quietly that the next time he was received by lions he would again shoot them, and since then they have been kept in the background and are seldom seen except when they stray.

General Virgin, the Emperor's Swedish adviser on Foreign Affairs tells a story of how he met a lion in front of the library:

"At first I was startled," he told me, "but then I went cautiously past the beast to the Emperor. I did not say a word to him about my reception, but I could see that he would have been pleased if I had. Anyhow, now I never meet a lion when I go to see him!"

When Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera presented me to the Emperor he was accompanied by three "cocker dogs," as he

AUDIENCE WITH THE LION OF JUDAH

called them, the gift of the Duke of Abruzzi, an uncle of the King of Italy. I had carefully prepared some questions, but they were the inquisitive questions of a white man, and I had now little hope that he would give me frank answers, for I had come to know the Abyssinians' reluctance to speak their thoughts. But the Emperor soon proved himself an exception. Our conversation naturally began with topical questions of the day, and I showed him some telegrams I had received from London that morning, informing me of the latest Press reports. The messages were unintelligible to me because it was being said that Abyssinia had already declared war, but the situation had cleared up slightly just at that time, and it did not look as if there would be any more serious incidents, much less war. The Emperor was delighted with such prompt information, for usually he only hears the news of the foreign Press weeks after. He had the telegrams translated and then shook his head violently, saying: "Yellem, Yellem," which is an emphatic form of "no" in his native tongue.

"Would Abyssinia," I asked, "resist a foreign invasion with all its available force?"

The Emperor answered in Amharic, and his answer was translated to me: "Abyssinia is a member of the League of Nations and signed the Kellogg Pact, so she feels in duty bound to make every effort to reach conciliation before resorting to weapons. Should a foreign power attack the country while these negotiations are in progress, then we should naturally oppose it! The Italians have no reason for mobilising!" At this point the Emperor interrupted his interpreter and explained excitedly in fluent French:

"The incidents of 5th December, 1934, and 29th January, 1935, were attacks, made by Italian troops coming from Afdam, on our two outposts that are stationed 3 kilometres and 1,600 metres respectively from Gerlogubi. Our soldiers never intended to fall upon either Afdam or the Italians, and I have always tried to create an atmosphere favourable to friendly conciliation, but I am not prepared to

turn a blind eye while these discussions drag on and more Italian forces are sent out to the neighbouring colonies. I feel compelled to make preparations for defending my own country."

"Does Abyssinia," I asked, "wish to expand her frontiers?"

The Emperor replied heatedly: "What we want at the moment is the liberation of those districts that the Italians are now occupying unlawfully. We should also like an outlet to the sea, but we intend to get that by peaceful negotiation with our neighbours, and in that connection I look upon Italy's territorial expansion in Africa as a real menace to Abyssinia. At the time of the treaty of 1906 Italy had already expressed a wish to join up their two colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, and that would automatically damage Abyssinia's integrity. Italy's recent actions are considered by us to endanger the safety that we have been guaranteed, not only directly by her, but also by the League of Nations of which she is a member."

The Emperor went on talking, not at all according to plan, and paid no more attention to the questions that I put to him.

"We welcome everyone's assistance, but we will never surrender our political or economic freedom, for we have not got any ground for conflicts apart from a section of frontier that has not been marked out; and that ought to be done soon because the people in those districts do not know where they belong, and the result is that the incidents that occasionally happen are, unfortunately, unavoidable. And this frontier could be decided quite peacefully. There were no disturbances while the frontiers were being adjusted between British Somaliland and Abyssinia; the English and Abyssinian commissions worked together quite quietly for three years."

"As Africa needs peace just as much as Europe," I asked, "what does Your Majesty suggest for ensuring it?" The Emperor's reply was surprisingly self-confident. Perhaps time will see his opinions materialise, but it appears to me that Africa is not so advanced as he imagines. This was his reply, word for word:

AUDIENCE WITH THE LION OF JUDAH

"If the European powers renounced their political and economic interests in Africa, the half-independent native peoples would enact modern laws that would eventually make them independent and responsible members of the League of Nations. Then peaceful co-operation would be possible in Africa. The League of Nations has the necessary organisation for guaranteeing safety and for supplying help to the member-states."

Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra then reminded me that the Emperor was very busy and that he had, at the most, fifteen minutes for this audience. He had, however, already talked with me for an hour and a half, and feeling cramped in the confined space of the room, he asked me to go outside with him into the garden. We did not talk any more then about the country's serious foreign conflict. I was far more interested in his own economic plans.

"If we wish to carry out thoroughly and develop the plans that we have in view to develop the industrial and commercial life of Abyssinia," he went on, "we must have adequate funds. Because of the world economic depression and our own lack of means, I have no fixed arrangements for the moment. My country has no National Debt nor obligations abroad, for our expenses are covered by revenue. I should, of course, be glad to accept loans for the economic development of the country, but in our present situation we cannot reckon on favourable or even acceptable terms.

"Abyssinia," the Emperor continued, "is going through the depression with the rest of the world, but I know that every depression in history ends some time, and the end of the present one is in sight. Everything would improve more quickly if nations would do away with all their trade restrictions which are only deepening the depression and stirring up international entanglements."

The audience was over and the Emperor left to return to the library where his ministers were awaiting him.

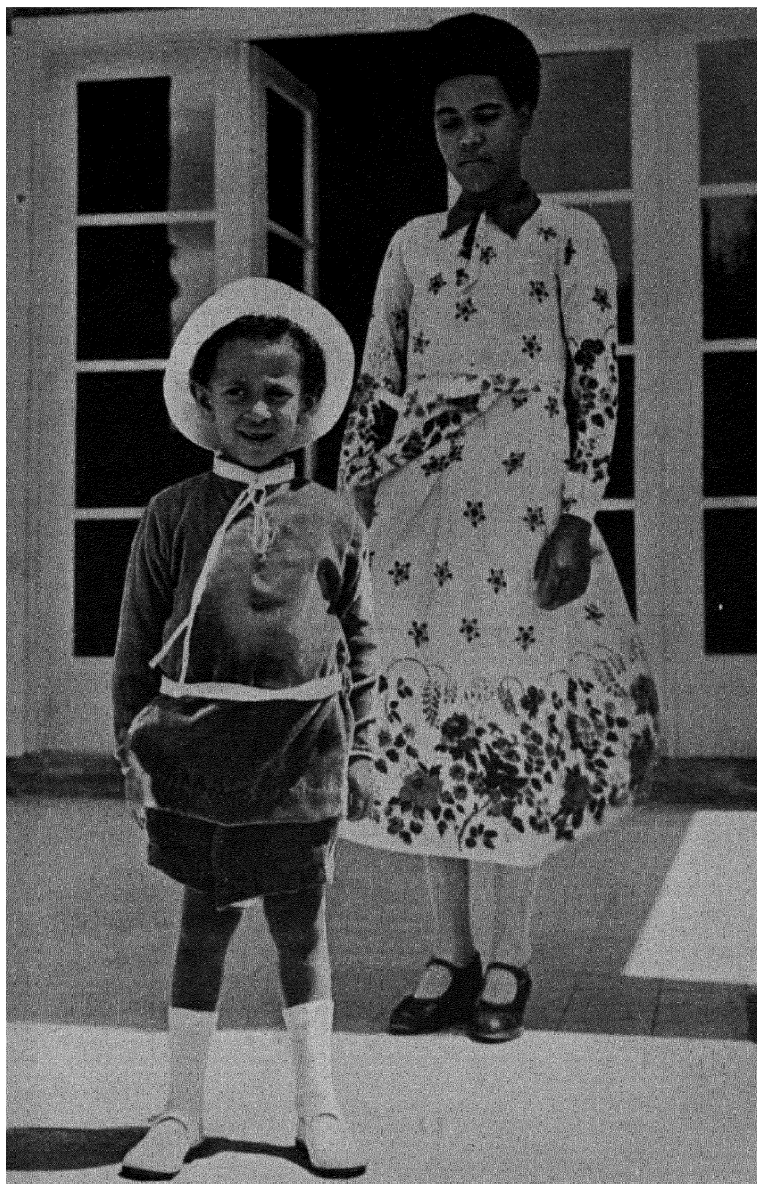
CHAPTER XI

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

Our car had driven up to the door and we were on the point of getting in when Lidge Asfou came after us. "His Majesty asks you," he said, "to come back."

We were taken on to a side terrace, where the Emperor was waiting for us. He had put off his official manner and received us like an ordinary man, but we took off our tropical helmets and stood there under the fierce midday sun until he waived court etiquette and said with a smile: "I do not want you to get sun-stroke on my account. Please put on your hats before it is too late. I asked you to return because I wanted to introduce you to my youngest son, Sahle Selassie. We have never taken his photograph, and I should be delighted if you would take it."

A native governess had brought the little prince to us, and his father, who was obviously delighted to see him, said something to him in Amharic, probably introducing us, because he pointed in our direction. Then they turned round again, and the most charming scene of my visit to Abyssinia began. Haile Selassie seemed to have forgotten his obligations to Imperial dignity, and not to notice that foreigners were watching him, for he was now only an anxious father, arranging his son's clothes, and kneeling in front of him trying out various poses. Then His Majesty chased one of the little "cocker dogs," and after catching it, put it down in front of the prince, and said to us, oblivious of everything else: "How would that do?" We naturally took the photograph as the Emperor wanted it done,



PRINCE SAHLE SELASSIE



DINNER AT THE EMPEROR'S

Left to right: The Emperor's Uncle, The Minister of Justice, Mrs. Tamm, The Emperor, Mrs. Bouveng, General Virgin, The Imperial Parasol-Holder, Captain Tamm.

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but if we had been able to snap him as he knelt on the ground busying himself with his youngest son, we should have had a much more interesting picture. The Emperor is widely known as a good father, and he and the Empress have three sons and two daughters. All Addis Ababa saw him crying aloud at the grave of one of his daughters, and the people were so moved by this human touch that they wept with him.

I am often asked if the Empress Manen is the Emperor's only wife. Naturally Haile Selassie, Emperor of a Christian state, has only one wife; polygamy, indeed, is unknown in Abyssinia, although there are three different kinds of marriage. Trial marriages, for instance, take place without any formalities, and if the couple find that they do not understand one another, they can separate immediately.

The second form is a "two years' marriage plan," which means that when the time has expired husband and wife must decide whether or not they want to continue as they are. If they want to live apart they have to be divorced legally, which is a long and costly procedure, and if they want to remain together, the marriage must be solemnised in church, after which there can be no question of divorce. The third variation is a religious ceremony and is a lifelong tie. The Emperor chose this form, not on religious grounds, but because he feels enlightened enough to dispense with the rather insecure trial marriages of his country.

The family bond pulls in one direction only in Abyssinia. Children respect their parents, but the more civilised love between husband and wife, and parents and children, is not common. The Emperor is again the exception. He also respects his parents, but certainly as far as his children are concerned, and in many other ways too, he feels the same duties as European fathers.

Haile Selassie knows that he owes everything to his father, Ras Makonnen, but he views the old warrior's striking characteristics quite objectively. He admires in this interesting type of the old Abyssinian all that he lacks in his own

make-up: lack of consideration for others, ruthlessness, and a predilection for intrigue. Ras Makonnen suited the times that he lived in, but things have changed in Abyssinia since then, and Haile Selassie I, the man of the new age, would certainly have disappointed his father. The difference in their characters is the psychological reason for the son's almost exaggerated regard for his father's memory.

The Empress Manen re-established the royal family's connection with the Solomon dynasty, for as she is a near relation of Menelik, she claims to have the blood of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in her veins, and that ensures her a prominent position in her country. She does not often appear in public, and even then she wears a white veil, and when she pays a visit a white awning has to be hung up between her car and the house to protect her from the Evil One. All these restrictions are imposed by the Church which exerts a very strong influence over her. It knows that the Emperor is not fundamentally religious, and would put the interests of the State before the Church, if he had not to depend on its help, and on that account the priests concentrate on the Empress who carries out, to the letter, their wishes and commands, in spite of her natural desire as a wife to be of the same opinion as her husband.

Although I tried very hard to get a private audience, I only had one chance of talking with the Empress, and that was when I was seeing over the Imperial hospital which is near the new palace. She was visiting the wife of the Minister of Education. At first all I could see was a parasol between two white curtains. The Empress goes about with these coverings in the most modern hospital in Abyssinia, and although she dispenses with them in the wards she still wears a white veil. Even here a great many priests accompanied her, and it was not exactly easy to get permission to speak to her. But fortunately the Swedish director of the hospital was willing to carry my request to the Empress, and a few minutes later her red parasol moved in my direction, the curtains were laid aside, and the

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Empress stood before me. I was pleasantly surprised to see a pretty woman, because pictures I had seen showed her as stout and ageing.

What surprised me most of all were her youthful features. I knew that she had a son who was twenty years old, but I would not have put her age at more than twenty-eight or thirty, and it is possible that she is not much older, for women marry very early in Abyssinia and even twelve-year-old mothers are not uncommon. I could not ascertain exactly how old she was, but I heard that she was supposed to be "about thirty-five."

She allowed me to be introduced and to take her photograph, then, after questioning me about my impressions of the country, moved away. The Empress has no official duties and does not often take part at the receptions arranged by the Emperor. She lives a very secluded life in the old style, spending most of her time away from Addis Ababa in one of her summer castles, where she is not constrained by the customs of a European Empress which her husband likes. Her only European friend is the English Minister's wife, who advises her on social points, just as Sir Sidney Barton is the confidant of the Emperor in such matters. Her lady-in-waiting is a German, Frau Hartl, the wife of the Court Architect. This woman used to play the interesting double role of lady-in-waiting and midwife at all the Empress's confinements. Frau Hartl is an influential member of the household and in many respects is the connecting link between the essentially Abyssinian Empress and the court which is becoming more and more Europeanised under the Emperor.

The Empress has absolutely no say in the education of her children who are being brought up in different castles far away from their parents. The Crown Prince, Asfou Wossen, is in the most remote of all of them, living in the mountainous province of Dessye, as Governor and Commander-in-chief of the garrison there. Thither he had gone with a large escort carefully chosen by the Emperor, just as I was arriving in

Abyssinia. It was rumoured that the heir to the throne was going to the scene of the war, and the people of Addis Ababa accompanied his soldiers to the farthest limits of the town, but as a matter of fact he was not going to the frontier district, but to his province of Dessye, where he is shut off hermetically from the capital and safe from a foreign invasion.

The Crown Prince's sudden departure had something to do with the rift that has existed for some years between him and his father. The Crown Prince does not seem to have fulfilled his father's expectations politically, and the Emperor does not see in him the man who will guarantee the carrying out of his plans, and he is convinced that Abyssinia can only be saved, if its next Emperor not only continues the works of reform, but completes them. It is only natural that a country that has lagged behind for years, and did not develop with the other civilised states, cannot catch up in two generations on all that it has missed. Menelik knew this too, and so does Haile Selassie but he also realises that if his reforms are interrupted, Abyssinia would be finished, for a state that has been given the right to a seat at the League of Nations must fulfil the obligations on which its membership depends. But the Crown Prince does not appear to be convinced of the importance of these reforms, for he was educated by adherents to the old régime, and the Emperor failed to notice that his son was being encouraged to oppose his father, until it was too late.

Asfou Wossen, the Crown Prince, was born when the Emperor was only starting on his great career, and was still living the simple and inconspicuous life of his fellow countrymen, abjuring on the advice of his counsellor, Menelik's powerful Minister of War, all the advantages of European culture and inventions, travelling on mules instead of in motor-cars. He did this not out of his own convictions, but only to show the people that the pretender to Menelik's throne was nothing more or less than an Abyssinian like themselves. As the Emperor did not possess so much power twenty years ago as



EMPRESS MANEN WITH DR. KURT HANNER



PRINCE MAKONNEN WITH HIS OWN CROWN

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he does to-day, he had to leave his son's education to the priests, and they made the young man an opponent of Europe and progress and, in time, an unconscious enemy of his father.

At first the Crown Prince had a scanty education. Foreign languages were not included, and he had to learn more about ecclesiastical affairs than modern monarchical duties. It was only later that the Emperor tried to fill the gaps in his education while admitting that he could not change his fundamental attitude. Tutors were fetched from France to carry out a long programme of instruction in everything from French literature to Swedish gymnastics, but they had to give up their work without achieving success. The Crown Prince was, and remained, a representative of the old school, thanks to the priests, whose protagonist he was destined to become.

Hence a break between father and son was unavoidable, though the Emperor has only recently felt the time opportune to settle accounts without causing disruption in the country. So it was that the Crown Prince was made Governor of Dessye, a remote and unimportant province, and the Emperor ordered him to the capital of the district, into virtual exile. The Emperor is in constant touch with the castle at Dessye and has even installed a telegraph station, so that he knows all that his son does, whom he receives, and who his friends are, and it is also no secret that the castle garrison have been picked from the most trusted soldiers and spies in the army.

This dispute between father and son may cause bloodshed in the future, if Abyssinia remains an independent state, for while the Emperor is keeping his eldest son in secret exile, he is paving the way for little Prince Makonnen to succeed to the throne. Prince Makonnen is just fourteen, but he already plays an important part in Abyssinian politics and even the sworn followers of the Emperor are taking sides in the struggle between him and Prince Asfou Wossen. What the Emperor misses in Asfou, he seems to have found in his younger son, who is his favourite, and it is no secret that Prince Makonnen is regarded by his father as his successor.

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While I could not get permission to visit the Crown Prince in Dessye, I was asked by the Emperor himself to have a conversation with Prince Makonnen, and if my visit was not particularly interesting, it was instructive, because in this young boy I was examining what might be the cause of a great Abyssinian civil war.

Prince Makonnen lives far out of the town in an old castle which was rebuilt for him and fitted out with French furniture. He has three tutors, his own guard, and some beautiful Australian and Arab horses. Commandant Henry Gigli, a retired French naval officer, is in charge of the household and the prince's education. Prince Makonnen is a true son of a wild country and this makes the commandant feel almost like a missionary, although he knows that he has been given this responsible task by the Emperor himself, and that he is preparing his charge for the throne and the struggle that the future holds for him. He and his wife bring up the boy as if he were their own and have created a real home for him in this primitive Abyssinian castle.

The Emperor lays down the general policy of his son's education, but the commandant does the teaching, and he has no difficult task, as he told me himself, for there is no more willing pupil than the little prince. He can already speak fluent French and English; he is a distinguished sportsman, riding, shooting, boxing and fencing with the best, and he feels at ease in society.

One day I received the Emperor's permission to see the young prince at his studies, and I was amazed that he did not take more advantage of the great freedom that he was allowed. His chief ambition is for knowledge, to grow stronger mentally and physically, and he has already plans in his head for which his father is having him prepared. Indeed if this young boy is not suppressed he will be a menace not only to his elder brother but to the Emperor himself. He was created Duke of Harar recently and this title was no empty honour, for he looks upon himself as the authorised ruler of

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this southern province; the Emperor cultivates this ambition, and when the Swedish Crown Prince and his wife were expected, he sent his son to Diredawa, a Haric town, the first important railway station in Abyssinia, to welcome the royal guests. The prince performed this duty admirably and Crown Princess Louise of Sweden said afterwards that their reception by this proud and confident boy was their most lasting memory of the whole journey.

Prince Makonnen offered us champagne and whisky at the end of our visit, while he himself drank orangeade. We had talked endlessly, for he had a multitude of questions and it was delightful to satisfy his curiosity. We felt all along that we were dealing with a young man who knew exactly what he wanted. He is the future Emperor of Abyssinia and my impression is that if he is not given the throne, he will take it.

The same evening I was speaking with some prominent Abyssinians whom I knew to be partisans of the Emperor and I told one of them who was the Emperor's confidant in the disturbed province of Harar, about my visit that afternoon. His face clouded as he listened.

"The prince is not liked in Abyssinia," he said; "he resembles his grandfather, Ras Makonnen, rather than the Emperor, and that is a pity, because our country is finished with the past, and the old-fashioned methods of government would be revived if he ascended the throne. It may be that the Crown Prince is not the 'right man,' but we do not consider Prince Makonnen to be any better."

Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra was standing beside us and this open declaration to a foreigner did not please him, and he said something in Amharic to his compatriot who suddenly pulled himself up.

Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra tried to clear the air after this and said: "Prince Makonnen is perhaps rather advanced for his years, but we know he will follow worthily in his father's footsteps. His relations with the Emperor are as they

should be, and he has the extra privilege of being the only man on earth who may address the Emperor with the intimate second person singular."

The Abyssinian Imperial family are seldom together, for they live far apart, and the princesses in particular, thanks to the restricted rights of women in this country, have to live a very secluded life. They are visited by the few friends that they have, in their old castle, and I was told that they are educated in the European style, one of them speaking English and French and the other French and German.

All the members of the family assemble once a year in September at the national and religious festival which is called the "Maskal." They sit in the Emperor's loge, on thrones of varying sizes, with crowns on their heads and dressed in clothes decorated richly with gold and diamonds. The Emperor's crown is like the Pope's tiara; it is the third crown he has possessed in a short time, and was made by a Greek jeweller in Addis Ababa for the last coronation. These crowns increased in splendour as Haile Selassie rose from Prince Regent, to King, and finally Emperor, and the history of the latest one throws some light on conditions in the country.

The court jeweller, a local Greek merchant, was ordered to make the new crown when the coronation day had been fixed; the Imperial jewels were entrusted to him to create the most splendid crown that could be made in Paris or London. The merchant went with his precious burden to Paris and brought back the most beautiful crown in the world. Its intrinsic value easily compensated for its lack of historical interest. The Emperor was well satisfied and the Greek was given a distinguished Abyssinian order, as is the custom on such occasions. As the coronation day came round the crown was exhibited and all the court jeweller's competitors had a chance of seeing the masterpiece. They discovered that the precious stones were counterfeit. When the Emperor heard of this unprecedented fraud he took the matter in hand and the Greek confessed that he had sold the crown jewels in

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Paris and had substituted clever copies. The money that the jeweller had made by this transaction was seized and used to buy new stones with all possible speed, and the crown was ready at the eleventh hour. The Greek's orders were rescinded and he received a very different order from the Emperor.

CHAPTER XII

THE PARLIAMENT WITH EMPTY BENCHES

BLATTA KIDANE MARIAM ABERRA, who was still my adviser and censor in Addis Ababa, rang me up at nine o'clock one morning. I knew at once that it was not urgent otherwise he would have sent round a messenger. A telephone call at nine meant that he had been trying to get his connection since eight. The capital of Abyssinia has a hundred telephones all connected to one exchange. There are no women operators, the work being done exclusively by men. There are in all two, and they have their hands full, for the technical equipment is prehistoric. The instruments are very old-fashioned. First one has to turn a handle for a long time with one hand, while the other holds the bell or one ear, to make the continual buzz bearable. After a while the exchange replies. The voice is weak, as if it were coming from an infinite distance, while in reality the operator is sitting at his switch-board only three hundred yards off. Abyssinian etiquette demands that you pass the time of day with the masuria, which means "winder" in Amharic, and he lives up to his name. In Abyssinia "Hallo," which is pronounced "Hallu," is not enough, and the conventional way of starting is as follows:

"Dinastalin, Masuria! Inde-mindi-nu?" (Good morning, winder, how are you?) The masuria replies politely, and only then can you give him the name and address of the person you want to speak to, for there are no telephone numbers. After this conversation you have to wait while the apparatus buzzes again and that is usually followed by a wrong number.

THE PARLIAMENT WITH EMPTY BENCHES

Such was the instrument to which I was called that morning. Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra was excited because he was speaking by command of the Emperor.

"His Majesty unexpectedly summoned Parliament at six o'clock this morning. He asks you to attend this extraordinary sitting of the people's representatives."

I had an important appointment with the Swedish General Virgin, who was going to take me to Genneth to show me the new officers' college, but when I mentioned to Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra that I was expecting the General that very minute, he was not to be so easily put off.

"I unfortunately cannot get in touch with General Virgin, because he is not on the telephone, but please tell him when he comes to fetch you, that it is by special command of His Majesty. He will understand."

General Virgin was most surprised when he heard about this unexpected sitting of Parliament, for he was the Emperor's chief adviser.

"I know nothing about it," he said, "and I cannot imagine what the Emperor has to say. He did not breathe a word to me of his intentions when I was speaking with him yesterday evening."

There had been little excitement for some time, and the people were gradually settling down again after the disturbing rumours that had been going the round for some days after the frontier incidents. Now the news of the calling of Parliament worked like a flash of lightning on a calm day. Tales of outrages were rife in the luckless town; new incidents were discussed; the numbers of killed were given, but no one knew anything definite. I tried to hear something from the Foreign Office, but the secretary in charge, Ato Tasfai Tagegné, could not give any information either.

"We are all waiting anxiously to hear His Majesty's statement," he said, "but what he is going to say, we do not know!"

As I drove back from the Foreign Office I saw crowds drift-

ing in the direction of the Parliament House, for the news of the special sitting had stirred up the whole of the black population and they were marching along, shouting and gesticulating. Noblemen, mounted and followed by hordes of servants, were all in State dress, for they were the guests bidden to Parliament, although their surprise and anxiety were visible on their faces.

Parliament is one of the latest innovations in Abyssinia. When the Emperor elaborated some years ago the Constitution founded by Menelik, he granted the people parliamentary representation; it cannot be compared with democratic systems on the Continent, for its members are chosen, just as in Germany and Italy, by a central leader—in this case the Emperor himself; and anyone who knows the country will agree that this method is the right one, for the people have not had enough experience of politics to be able to elect their own representatives. Voting rights, and the fact that constituencies could be easily bought, would complicate the position still further, so Parliament, just like the many other political administrations in the country, is only a shadow organisation, and the Emperor's plaything, rather than a real governmental instrument. It has, however, one main purpose. It has been used since its inception as the Emperor's forum when he has anything of vital importance to announce. He is the only speaker of this unique parliament; he makes no replies and there are no debates. The members' duty is simply to listen to their ruler and take note.

I was fascinated by the crowd and infected by their excitement, and grew so impatient in my hotel that I set out at once and arrived at my rendezvous an hour early. Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra had not arrived, and I only just made my way through the crush to the entrance, where officials refused me admittance. But I was better off outside than in, for the colourful scene in front of the building was far more interesting than the cool empty rooms inside. Soldiers in full-dress uniform marched up in columns of fours with their officers,

THE PARLIAMENT WITH EMPTY BENCHES

and disappeared through a door. I thought that they might be a protective force or a guard of honour for the Emperor, but actually they were only a section of the soldiers who fill most of the seats in the visitors' gallery. The next procession was the priests, and after them came the high dignitaries, many driving slowly through the town in modern cars, and accompanied by barefooted servants who ran alongside, while many others rode on mules with ornamental saddles. The square in front of the parliament buildings was filling up gradually with the servants whose masters were by this time collecting in the corridors, and as zero hour approached the mob grew more lively, and the arrivals more distinguished. Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra appeared, quite as impatient as I was myself, and at length I was allowed inside. But I was forbidden to look about me.

"Please follow me," was all he said, and conducted me into a small unfurnished side room. I asked to be allowed to go on watching the interesting scene outside, but he declined sharply. Afterwards he soothed me by explaining his reason.

"Etiquette forbids you to see anyone or even talk, before the Emperor comes in. He is the first man in the country and he must be the first to be greeted by you. After he arrives you will have your freedom again and you may do what you will."

In the meantime a few more guests were shown into the room. The Emperor had decided himself which journalists were to be asked, and he had not been exactly generous with his invitations, for only three of the twenty-five special correspondents who had come to Addis Ababa since my arrival, had been invited, in addition to a Press photographer and news-film camera-man. We were all excited because we knew that we were about to witness an event that we should never experience a second time. As we had nothing else to do, we tried to solve the riddle of this parliamentary sitting. We knew that the Emperor had only invited us to give extra publicity to his speech; not that we minded that, for we were

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delighted to have something to write about after several uneventful days.

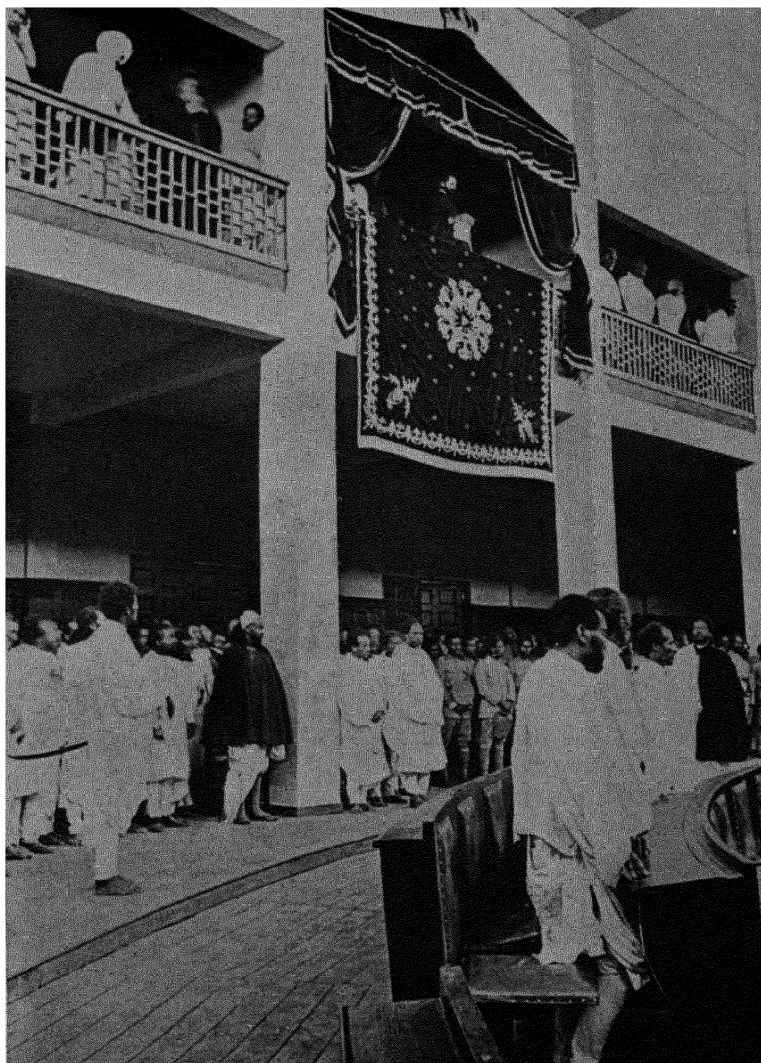
We guessed from the shouting outside that the Emperor was approaching, and when the noise grew louder, and all the people in the square were yelling at the tops of their voices, Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra reappeared and led us into the great hall of the house. The corridors and galleries were thick with people. Right and left of the Emperor's box sat the high dignitaries of the land, among them Abuna Kyrillos, head of the Coptic Church. The ministers' bench was full. Their Excellencies sat there proudly, dressed in their high-necked capes, and on a raised seat stood the President of the Chamber. Every part of the building was filled, but the benches of the representatives were empty. I turned to Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra: "Where are the representatives?"

His answer astonished me completely:

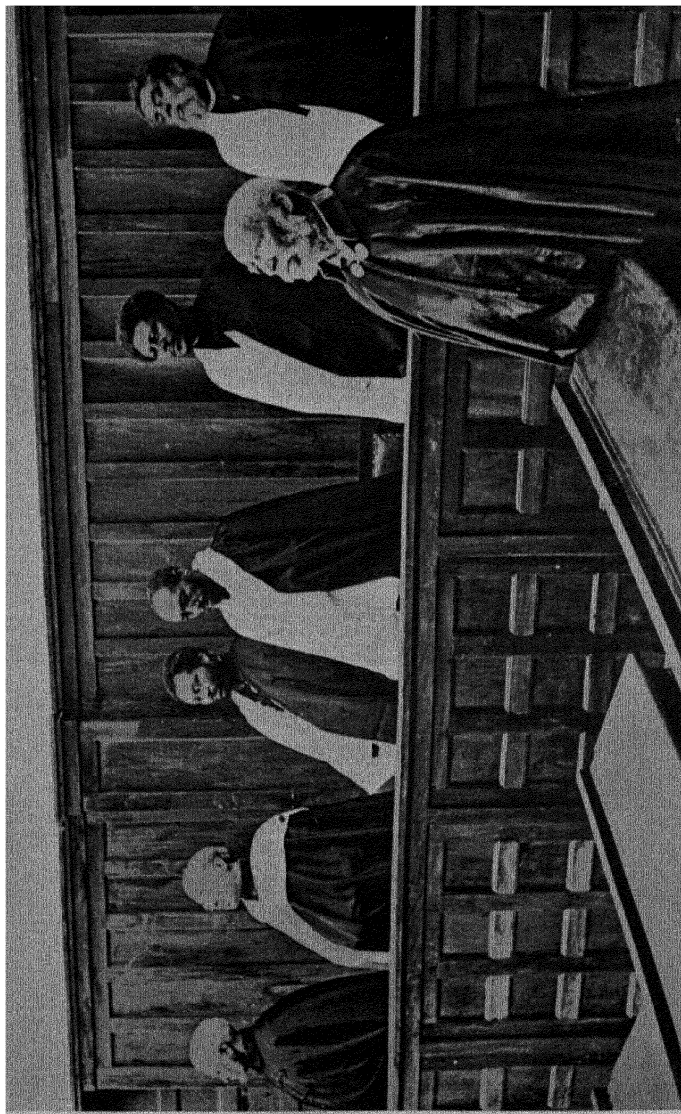
"Only one representative is present," he whispered; "the others are unavoidably absent, for they all live in the interior, some as much as three weeks' caravan journey off. His Majesty only convoked Parliament this morning, and communication being as it is, it was unthinkable that they would arrive in time."

The Emperor's box was raised high above the ground and surmounted by a crown. Green curtains were parted on each side, and when they were lowered it was the sign that the Emperor had taken his place, for even in this modern building the ancient customs of the land compel the Emperor to be protected from the Evil One. Suddenly the curtains were drawn aside, the whole house rose up, and the Emperor appeared at the edge of his box. He held his speech in his hand, and began to speak at once in the breathless silence of the house.

He addressed them as "Ethiopians," and did not once use the words Abyssinia or Abyssinian, for this term is unpopular in the country, as it comes from the Latin form of the Arabian word "chabash," which means literally "mix." This was



THE EMPEROR IN HIS BOX OPENING PARLIAMENT



MINISTERS LISTENING TO THE EMPEROR'S SPEECH

Left to right: Foreign Minister, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Finance, Minister of Education, Postmaster General, Governor of Addis Ababa, and in front The One People's Representative

THE PARLIAMENT WITH EMPTY BENCHES

the name given to the country by the Arabs who considered that the Abyssinians were a conglomeration of various races. The Abyssinians prefer the word "Ethiopia," which literally means "Land of Dark-Faced Men."

The Emperor spoke so softly, without emotion or gestures, that some of his listeners had to hold their breath in fear of missing a word.

The speech was of immense importance. I heard afterwards that he was introducing conscription and compulsory school attendance, and if these acts are put into operation an epoch-making change will take place in the country, for they would bring about the downfall of the omnipotence of the Church. But it is questionable if the Emperor can carry out his intentions.

It is difficult to say who is liable to be called up for military service, for the inhabitants of the interior districts can only be traced with difficulty and sometimes are never found. Their ages are not known, so they could not be enlisted by years, but only according to serviceability. Another difficulty is that most of them are already in military service, but under their own chiefs, not the Emperor, and it is not likely that these armies would readily be given up to the Emperor. The chiefs are too narrow-minded to realise that they have all the one object in view in protecting the independence and freedom of their country, and as they only regard the Emperor as king among kings, they jealously guard against his having a more powerful army than they can ever command. The Church also opposes the Emperor, for it knows that a stronger army would automatically increase the Emperor's political power, and once he had sufficient trained forces, he could easily brush aside the opposition of the priests.

Universal education also crosses the Church's path, for not all Abyssinians are literate, although many of them can read and write the difficult Amharic language, which resembles Hebrew. As the priests are the only teachers in the primitive church schools that are found in every village, the education of

the people is in their hands from childhood up. With his new decree the Emperor has opened yet another door to the hated culture of Europe, because he has laid it down that foreign languages must be given a more prominent place in the curriculum, and that Roman letters must be learned as well as Amharic script.

The Emperor's audience was absolutely loyal; even the priests who were present belonged to the loyalists, for the rebels live in the interior and hardly ever come to Addis Ababa.

When Haile Selassie put down the last page of his speech, after speaking for an hour, his success was assured. We saw some striking scenes in this parliament of empty benches. Old warriors who had fought with Menelik at Aduwa, were consumed by enthusiasm; they wept, fire burned in their eyes. The monotonous voice of the Emperor affected them in the same way as the priests' stringed instruments at the Church festival; they were in a trance, for they had listened to the Imperial speech with their hearts as well as with their ears. If the Emperor had ordered them to war there and then, not one would have drawn back. The young men in the audience were particularly enthusiastic, but there was no audible sign, and excitement was only expressed in their burning faces and flashing eyes.

After the President of the Chamber had dissolved the session, applause was permitted, but the exact form that it must take is dictated by national etiquette: the audience may clap for three brief periods one after the other. After that the people take their leave, in strict order of seniority, then the high dignitaries and finally the Emperor. Once they are outside, the laws of etiquette are relaxed and the people cheer their Emperor who salutes them with great happiness and affection, standing for a while at the top of the steps, gazing at them. This small man has suddenly become great. He is called in the European quarter the "Black Napoleon," and at that moment there seemed nothing ironical in the title. The

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Emperor of Abyssinia is weak physically, but he has enough strength of mind to be strong if it comes to war.

The Emperor entered his car and drove off amid tremendous enthusiasm, the people running abreast with the motor, shouting "Habet! Habet!" but they left a free passage for him, and the soldiers who stood on the running-boards never had to use their hippopotamus whips.

I remained behind, and I must confess that I had lost my objective view-point, and rejoiced to think that I understood these black men's happiness.

I tried to get a copy of this important speech because the scraps that Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra had whispered to me in the chamber were not sufficient to give me a clear impression, and I distinctly felt that I had witnessed a great Abyssinian event and wanted to rush off to the telegraph office and send news to London.

But no one would translate it for me. Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra murmured something about "trust in God" and other commonplaces, but he did not want me to know anything about the enactment for military service. I went from one listener to another, speaking in French, English and German, but no one would help me. I drove to the Foreign Office, to the palace and the Information Bureau, but found nobody who would tell me the substance of the great speech. I felt consoled when I was told that I would receive that afternoon a French translation in full. But it was not until three days later that I picked up, by chance, an Amharic pamphlet that enlarged on the speech. A European who had a fair knowledge of the language made a rough translation for me, and I sent it to the English and other ministries. It was in this roundabout way that I got the text. The official French translation only appeared one week later, ten days after the speech had been made.

After the sitting was over, I was introduced to the white-haired General Secretary of the Parliament. He received me in his study which might have been a room in Paris or London.

The whole building, indeed, is very fine, and many Balkan states might envy Abyssinia at least for its parliament building. It was built a year ago by a German architect, and stands near the old palace of Gibbi, of which it is a part. The secretary took me behind the scenes and up to the Senate room on the first floor, where there is another huge throne for the Emperor. Painters of the Imperial Art School were working there on frescoes, and I met the court painter, Agegnhou Ingida. He was engrossed in his work when we came in, bending over a photograph of the Emperor from which he was painting a portrait. "His Majesty used to have time," he said, "to sit for me, but lately I have been trying to get him for weeks, but it is no good: he simply has no time!"

I was astonished by the technique of these black painters, and Agegnhou Ingida, their master, was as happy as a child when I praised his work to the secretary. I saw that I had won my way to the heart of this painter, and tried to get a translation of the speech from him, but he refused too.

"The Emperor has spoken and I have not the right," he said seriously, "to repeat his words. If he commands it, I shall be glad to help you, for the world would benefit from his splendid speech. It was clever and courageous. Try to get the Emperor's permission, for without it you will find no one in Abyssinia who can translate his words for you."

"Then talk rather about your art, Agegnhou Ingida," I said, and this is what he told me:

"I owe everything to His Majesty. He enabled me to study, and now he is my only patron. What you see here is not really my style of work; I am a portrait painter—frescoes are not my line. If it would interest you come and see me. It would be a pleasure to show you my house and my pictures." So we arranged a meeting that evening.

"I live far out of the town, but I will send my servant to show you the way. He is a dependable man, and knows a road where you will not meet any hyenas."

CHAPTER XIII

WE ARE ALL GOING OUT TO DIE

AGEGNHOU INGIDA's servant carried a petroleum lamp when he came for me, and before setting out I picked up an electric torch. Then we started on our long walk through the streets of Addis Ababa, the servant going in front to show the way. I followed after him, picking out a path in the opaque darkness, with my servant Tierra in the rear. He held a big stick, and was continually on the lookout for hyenas. One often meets these little processions at night in Addis Ababa, for the Ethiopian capital is a town without light, and sundown extinguishes all signs of life in the streets, and the lights of the cars that rush past, and the lanterns of a few belated pedestrians contrast strongly with the inky night. But when the moon shines the town is light and its reflection on the house-tops is strangely beautiful. The beams of carbide lamps flicker on to the street from a few houses, and in the distance some of the windows in the new palace are shining out. The station lamps are added to them when the trains arrive.

We left the European quarter and were enveloped in the deep tropical night. The streets were now quite deserted: the natives were asleep in their huts, and their zibus, cats, hens, goats and everything else that makes the day so noisy were asleep.

After we had walked for an hour and a half—we could only go slowly for it is no easy matter to go on foot 8,000 feet above sea-level—my guide pointed to a light in the distance. "That is Ato Agegnhou Ingida's house," he said.

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The light encouraged us to quicken our pace, and we hurried along with the servant's light bobbing in front, and at last we stood in front of the door. The three raps on the door echoed hollowly, and the house suddenly came to life, people appeared in the big yard with lanterns, the door opened, and my friend bowed low and welcomed me into his house.

My host usually wore European clothes, and spoke excellent French, choosing his words carefully. He had ideas and thoughts of his own, but he still lived in the old tukul of his ancestors. Tukuls, as Abyssinians call their dwellings, are not so mean as the huts of the Gallas or Somalis, but by European standards they are hardly houses. This one consisted of a single room divided into two parts by a curtain. Six European chairs stood in front of the curtain as well as a wicker table with a gramophone. On the other side of the curtain were the bed, some chests and trunks, and over the bed, a rifle. This was a typical Abyssinian home of the better class. The wall was papered with old copies of the *Daily Mirror*, but over this unusual decoration hung the pictures of an accomplished artist. It was obvious that Ingida was not a copyist, but a real genius.

Agegnhou Ingida had changed into Abyssinian clothes, and I admired the quality in this Amharic nobleman that made him want to stress his own nationality and not his European culture before a foreigner. He took pains to dismiss from his mind all that he had learned in Europe and North Africa, and to show me as vivid a picture as possible of an Abyssinian at home.

The natives bury themselves in this African land, and they draw strength from it, even if they have spent some years of their life in Europe. The Emperor discovered Agegnhou Ingida's unusual talent at an early age and sent him to study in Paris at the Academie des Beaux Arts. Agegnhou Ingida told me nothing of his life there, but I had heard of a strange tragedy that had turned the jovial young painter into a melancholy artist. Once he had concentrated on portraits and town

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scenes, but now he has taken refuge in the grandeur of the Abyssinian countryside, and is healing his broken heart in its eternity.

Agegnhou Ingida met a young Swiss girl at the Paris Academy. She was a painter's daughter, and was interested in this talented African, for even the most critical judges admitted that his work was accomplished. She invited Agegnhou Ingida to spend the holidays at her home in Switzerland; her father patronised the black artist, and gradually a firm friendship grew up between the two young colleagues. Agegnhou Ingida fell in love with Switzerland and, in spite of himself, with the girl. When they went back to Paris at the end of the holidays, his spirits were broken because he felt that this woman would never return his love.

But he was wrong. The girl had not wanted to admit it, but she loved Agegnhou Ingida, or at least thought that she did, and in the free unbiased atmosphere of Paris, they confessed their love. Then followed days of great happiness which resulted in some of the artist's finest pictures: ecstatic, colourful canvasses. They were overjoyed to have found each other, and did not reflect for a minute on the consequences of what was hardly a conventional adventure. The girl decided to give up her life and to go to the country that her black lover described so vividly. Agegnhou Ingida was delighted at this for he longed for his own home, and behind his love he was naturally proud, and wanted to show his fatherland to this beautiful white woman, and her to his compatriots.

Suddenly they both disappeared from Paris, and four weeks later appeared in the southern province of Arusi. When they reached Addis Ababa the happy pair met with their first disappointment. Agegnhou Ingida's friends and relatives, who were prominent citizens, would not recognise the white woman, and they were ostracised both by Abyssinians and the European colony. They were sick at heart, for in Addis Ababa they were criticised and cold-shouldered more than in Paris. But love closed their eyes to disapproval, and they

decided to return to Arusi, and to forget there that any other people existed on the face of the earth.

While still in Addis Ababa the girl had begun to see the impossibility of their move, and she accompanied Agegnhou Ingida more out of pity than conviction, although her feelings were still confused. But in Arusi she saw that she did not really love the artist, and that she would be sacrificing her whole life by staying with him, so she wrote home to her parents in Switzerland, and one day her father arrived in Arusi to take his daughter back to Europe.

Agegnhou Ingida was left alone, and a year passed before he returned to Addis Ababa. This modern Othello is still inconsolable, and he imagines that his experience was all a dream, but he does not care to speak about it, and if he does do so, stresses this queer theory.

The gramophone on the table at which we were now sitting, had been left behind by the white woman, and the records of French songs and English dance tunes were her favourites. He clings to the unlovely instrument, and plays the records when he is alone in the tukul. He played to me some Abyssinian folk songs. They were melancholy and untuneful, sung in a high-pitched falsetto. Although the music reminded me of Arab and Jewish songs, it really expressed the soul of Abyssinians, for there is nothing of love or human feelings in it; only praise of battle, and warriors, and heroic legends from the national history.

While we were listening in silence to the gramophone, servants brought in tetch, a kind of wine made from honey. Agegnhou Ingida stood up and said something to a woman, who then sat down beside us.

This serving woman was his wife, and she was a typical Amharic beauty. The Amharic women are not generally so good-looking as the Gallas, who have finer features, or the Somalis who have better figures to their waists at any rate; but this painter's wife was the most beautiful woman that I met in Abyssinia. I looked at her for a long time, perhaps too

long, taking in her almond-shaped eyes, her well-formed forehead, and the exquisite curve of her mouth, but although she drooped her head shyly, she snatched her chances to return my stare. The loose shama-like garment that she wore over her blouse and rough skirt concealed her figure entirely. I wanted to see all the natural beauty of this Abyssinian woman, so I asked Agegnhou Ingida if I might see his wife without clothes. I realised at once that my request might appear tactless, but the artist in him understood that it was not only this particular woman that interested me, but her type, and without a moment's consideration, he told his wife to undress. She hesitated, which is very unusual, for Abyssinian wives obey their husbands blindly, however unreasonable their commands, and they must not stop to reflect for an instant. But for some reason or other this woman did not want to do as her husband wanted. It is generally thought that native Africans are shameless, and I myself was shocked by what I saw sometimes in the street, but I realised now that they have their own ideas of modesty. The white garment that they drape over their other clothes is only worn to shut out curious eyes still more effectively. An Abyssinian girl may sometimes seem immodest, but she would never wear the low-cut evening dresses or bathing suits of fashionable European women.

For this reason Agegnhou Ingida could not find anyone to paint after his lover went back to Europe, and before he could go on with his work he had to marry this beautiful Abyssinian. She is his only model; twenty different poses of her are on the walls of the room, and sitting for her husband is her only duty as a wife. But the memory of the white woman is still too fresh in Agegnhou Ingida's mind for him to be satisfied with his black wife.

I felt uncomfortable, but the artist would not give in, and upbraided his wife until she declared herself ready to expose herself down to the waist, but she made one proviso, which seemed to me afterwards a charming example of the working of these simple people's minds. She did not want to stand

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naked, but to show me how an Abyssinian woman does her washing. I did not understand her request, but her husband agreed and she disappeared. A few minutes later we were called into the yard, and she was bending over a tub washing her husband's shama. She was bare to the waist, and our petroleum lamps played beautifully on her lacquered skin. It was only possible to appreciate all her beauty after she had taken off her dirty clothes, and I think that every European painter would envy Agegnhou Ingida his model.

She was scrubbing the shama furiously without looking up, to conceal her embarrassment. We went in again and Agegnhou Ingida explained why his wife had shown herself like this.

"The Abyssinian women always do their washing with their dresses off to the waist, so my wife hit on the idea of standing at her wash-tub so as to avoid giving the impression that she was showing herself naked to a stranger, like any wanton girl."

When she came into the room again, she had forgotten her shyness, and I asked her name. But she hesitated, and Agegnhou Ingida explained that she did not want to give away her name because she thought that by being anonymous, the whole story would remain her own secret.

At length I was able to examine Agegnhou Ingida's pictures. He is a disciple of the French impressionists, but instead of their pastel shades, he uses the bright colours that express the primitiveness of his country. He paints more portraits than anything else, and his work shows that he did not waste his time under his French teachers. I preferred his Abyssinian landscapes and the pictures of native life. Here all his talent and originality came through; he saw the scenes with the eye of a native, and effects were brought out that would otherwise have been lost on Europeans.

Agegnhou Ingida is the director of the Imperial School of Art where he and two young painters represent the new style of Abyssinian painting. Their predecessors were the untrained

artists seen in the bazaar at Addis Ababa, who portrayed historical scenes with childish simplicity. Ato Belatshou was the best of them and till the coming of Agegnhou Ingida, he was the only Abyssinian "master." He is still working to-day in his squalid hut, and turns out two or three pictures a week, all with the same motives—the meeting of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba or the famous trial of King Theodor. These pictures cost about 3 or 5 talers, while Agegnhou Ingida gets 100 to 150 talers for his, but the superiority of his work is not denoted sufficiently by the difference in the price. It is cheap because artist's fees are low.

Our glasses were refilled with tetsh. It is a heavy drink which closes the eyes and loosens the tongue, and that was how Agegnhou Ingida began to talk politics with a foreigner.

"I have been commissioned," he told me, "to design our soldiers' new uniforms. The Emperor is now reorganising his army. You have probably seen armed men in town and country, boys of twelve already carrying rifles on their tender shoulders, and old men with sabres at their right sides as the custom is in Abyssinia. We Abyssinians love arms, not because we are bloodthirsty, for we have become a peace-loving people, but because they stand as a symbol of our power. They have made us rulers. We are not simple bondmen who serve in the army because we have to, and any country that attacks us will have to reckon with our national spirit." He spoke vehemently with cheeks flushed half with patriotism and half with tetsh.

"We are morally prepared for the present situation," he went on, "we have always known that the great battle that Menelik won at Aduwa was not decisive for all time. Technically we are unprepared, but more serious than the shortage of rifles, aeroplanes and tanks, is the lack of sympathy in the world for our cause. I know that Abyssinia is a land of mystery, and that a foreigner can spend ten years in the country without coming to know anyone or anything. We are an island sur-

rounded by the rest of Africa. We are not governed by the few half-wild negroes that live in the bush, but by the Amhara, a ruling race."

"Do you want war?" I asked trying to turn this pathetic tirade into a conversation.

"This country," he answered, "is ruled as of old by the Emperor. His will is our will, and if he wants war, or is forced into war, none of us, not even the women, will stay at home. I and my servants, like all Abyssinians will go to war, fighting shoulder to shoulder, to the death. And mark my words, we are all going out to die. If we are hit, we are lost, for we have no doctors to bandage our wounds, or stretcher-bearers to bring the injured out of the field to the hospital. We bleed to death if we are hit, but in spite of that not one solitary soul will be left behind!"

"Are you counting on a victory for Abyssinia?" I asked, for a native's opinion interested me tremendously, and I saw that I had at last found an Abyssinian who told me the truth, and did not compromise like most of his fellow countrymen. But this time Agegnhou Ingida answered cautiously.

"If we are opposed by Italy alone, victory will certainly fall to us, for Italy has no right here, and we hope that this will win us the support of the other powers. But even if other countries, as has been rumoured, support Italy, we are ready to fight them all to safeguard our independence. If there is to be a world war in North-East Africa then come it must, but we shall never forget that this country has belonged to us for thousands of years, and that it is our duty to lay down our lives for its freedom, just as our fathers did. We are afraid that England will join forces against us, and if she does, we are lost, for she is the only power whom we consider strong enough to capture Abyssinia. We know, too, that English colonial experience would make her rule more tolerable and, perhaps, more profitable for both of us, than would be the case after a defeat at the hands of the French or Italians. But this possibility does not concern us, for we are an independent people who have

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always understood how to protect our freedom, and once more victory will be ours."

Agegnhou Ingida became more thoughtful after he had finished speaking, but he did not regret having vented patriotic opinions to a foreigner.

"And I think that all Abyssinians think like me," he added, and later he said:

"Don't you think that we have enough troubles of our own without this foreign conflict? A revolution is going on behind the scenes. There is a strong group of young men who have been abroad, and have seen for themselves that the world does not stop at the Abyssinian frontier. They are planning revolution, and the Emperor is on their side. There are also others who will always be discontented, and who will make war on the Emperor as well as Italy, and hope to be rewarded by a permanent return to the 'good old times.' The slave owners belong to these unruly elements since they cannot live without free labour, and so do the customs officers, old pirates who used to demand money from foreigners on the street and who are no longer allowed to have a share of these illicit import duties, and the petty kings who are no longer imaginary governors in their own right. The true Abyssinian takes the side of the Emperor against these people. I myself was in difficulties when slavery was abolished, but the position of the slaves who were set free from day to day, although they have never been looked on as free people, was much more complicated. However, we realised that the decree had to be carried out in the country's own interest, and that not till then could we join the ranks of civilised nations."

The servants now brought in coffee, which is the sign that a visit is at an end, and I set out on my long return journey.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RASPUTIN OF AFRICA

It was midnight when I reached the Hotel Imperial. The only sound was the familiar sing-song of the night watchmen in the distance. Apart from them, everyone slept. Underneath the only light in the hall sat the director of the Foreign Office, Ato Tasfai Tagegné, playing an ancient kind of chess with a Greek lawyer. I sat down beside them and began to tell them about my interesting experiences at Agegnhou Ingida's.

"He is a talented fellow," said Tagegné, "but he stands just as much alone with his art as the Emperor with his new plans for governing. Many of us have brains, but we cannot all make ourselves felt." He looked more serious then and asked me the inevitable question of every Abyssinian:

"Have you heard any news?"

"That is just what I wanted to ask you, Ato Tasfai Tagegné," I replied, laughing to myself. The foreign journalist evidently knew more about this country's affairs than the second man in the Foreign Office. I was gradually becoming accustomed to it and on days when nothing important was happening, I even enjoyed this change of roles.

"We do not know much about the aims and plans of the Italians," Tagegné said, "but we know that we do not want to imitate their methods. It is still my belief that war could be avoided if the Italians would stop provoking us."

He took out a newspaper cutting.

"Look at this. News is published in Rome that the Italians had taken an Abyssinian flag at Wal-Wal. Now that is not

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possible, because the one or two soldiers, who were only escorting the Anglo-Abyssinian Frontier Commission, had absolutely no flags with them. For us a flag is a sacred thing, and they are always trying to get us on our soft spots."

We all drank another whisky and then got up. As he was leaving Tagegné told me that His Excellency the Foreign Minister asked me to visit him the next morning.

"When should I come," I asked.

"Please do not come before seven o'clock," he replied. "His Excellency will not have returned from the palace before then."

I had got used to these early hours by now, and I knew that the ministers had to be at the palace by five o'clock, when the first discussions took place. Nor was it uncommon for petitioners to wait up all night in order to be among the first to address these distinguished gentlemen. When I first arrived in Addis Ababa I was amazed by the story told me by Mr. George of the American Ministry that the Minister of Finance announced himself one morning at six o'clock at the American Ministry, and the First Secretary had to discuss an important monetary transaction in his dressing-gown and slippers. But I was now prepared, and appeared punctually at seven at the Foreign Office next morning, for my audience with His Excellency Belatin Getta Herouy.

In Abyssinia ministerial posts are continually being changed, the Foreign Minister alone having kept his post for some years. The importance of his office is expressed by the building, which is the largest and finest governmental office in Addis Ababa. In the Ministry of Trade there was more life, but the work done there is not in the usual routine of ministries. The officials are concerned with customs business. They are the customs receivers and have taken over from the pirates who used to seize these taxes.

Most of the other government offices are in small houses and huts, and the smallest and most improbable of all is the Ministry of War. It is a small tumble-down place; in front

of the door two soldiers stand with their rifles at the slope, and the words "War Ministry" are scrawled on a board in Amharic and French—an announcement that would have been better kept quiet. Even now when times are so disturbed, peace reigns in this building. Its minister lives in his own province in the interior and the First Secretary, a nephew of the Emperor, has nothing to say. This is one of the most conspicuous examples of the Emperor's centralised power, for he conducts all the business of his office personally, from the building of fortifications on the frontier to the buying of bullets. That is the kind of impression one gets at all the ministries.

The only exceptions are the Ministry of Trade and the Foreign Office. In the latter work goes on night and day, but even there it is not constructive, for the foreign policy is not decided there, just as the Home Office has nothing to do with home affairs. A foreign adviser of the Emperor once said to me with a smile: "It is a good thing that the Foreign Office is not concerned with foreign affairs." The secretaries' work is purely clerical. They write and translate diplomatic notes and refer to books on international law to vindicate the Emperor's moves, and recently these notes have been turned out by an almost mass production system. Abyssinia has very good reasons for avoiding war at all costs, and wants to settle the present dispute by arbitration, so these black diplomats have to start work at dawn and sit there until after sunset, which almost amounts to sacrilege in the eyes of Abyssinians. In the evening important international documents are written out by candlelight, which shows up both literally and metaphorically the problem of the country. Abyssinia is a country of great contrasts. While the Court of the Lion of Judah moves on the same footing as the Court of St. James, its grandiloquent despatches are transcribed by candlelight on rough tables. I often sat in these offices and experienced the full flavour of this contrast. I spoke about it to a young secretary, who would like me to have had a different impres-

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sion of the Foreign Office, and he showed me, as a last resource, the lighting system and the electric plant.

"You see, we have this wonderful electric installation, with our own dynamo which is fed with petrol. All that we need is the money for the petrol."

Belatin Getta Herouy's Ministry has at least one room furnished in the European style; this is the main drawing-room. The furniture is all nineteenth century and every piece represents a different period, but then Abyssinians think that it is very luxurious and it is used for receiving foreign Ministers, and the discharge of important international documents, which the Emperor prepares himself and then, in strict European custom, passes over to his Foreign Minister for signing.

One evening a few days previously I had been the only journalist invited to witness the signing of the Anglo-Abyssinian Agreement for the British Somaliland frontier. A large table was put in the middle of the room and round it sat the members of the English commission under Colonel Clifford, and the Abyssinian commission who were playing a prominent part in the country's affairs as they had been eyewitnesses of the Wal-Wal incident. Sir Sidney Barton and Belatin Geta Herouy sat at the middle of the table. Documents and maps were spread out and were being minutely compared in the light of a petroleum lamp, which cast an air of mystery over them all.

By daylight the same room reminded me of a provincial doctor's waiting-room. The minister was still with the Emperor so I had to wait.

I had already heard a great deal about Belatin Getta Herouy, indeed he was the only man besides the Emperor whom I had known by name in Europe. Herouy's name is well known among most of the African peoples, and in his own country he is called the Rasputin of Africa. I was told about the hypnotic powers that he is supposed to possess; all kinds of unlikely stories of how his political opponents were overcome by his austere eyes, were spread abroad.

When I met him for the first time, I searched for this supernatural power, but two rather startled eyes peered at me from under grey eyebrows. There was no fire in these spent eyes and his handshake was weak and undistinguished. Previously I had tried everywhere to find the origin of these rumours, and soon I discovered that a curious early history had created a legendary personality. He had been born the son of a slave, and was a slave himself in his childhood. Old Abyssinians remember the time when they saw him in the lowest ranks of Lidj Yassu's servants—at court the servants line up in order of precedence—carrying the ordinary rifle of his master. His unbelievable career began here: the former slave was to eat at the table of the Emperor of Japan, the King of Italy, and the French President. Although he had to carry the king's rifle, he had other more responsible duties to perform and as this humble man could never give offence to anyone, he was eventually given a post by the then Governor of Harar, Ras Tafari, the present Emperor, and he was able to carry out his orders. He became the Governor's spy at the court of the unpopular king. He learned for his master about the royal intrigues and he made known the king's predilection for Arab and Mohammedan clothes, and when Lidj Yassu, thinking that he was among friends, wore Arab clothes instead of the Abyssinian shama, he was betrayed by Herouy.

While he was in court service, he was a faithful servant to Ras Tafari, who was told of the king's every movement and so enabled to make his plans accordingly, and when Lidj Yassu was driven out the servant was promoted to Foreign Minister. There are indeed few men to whom the Emperor owes more than he does to the silent Herouy, who has remained a mute servant in spite of his high position. A record of duty accomplished lies behind him, even if what he once had to do might be called by another name.

A car drove up and I was jerked from the past to the present. Belatin Geta Herouy had arrived. I watched him

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from the balcony as twenty servants assisted him ceremoniously out of his small Italian car, and as he chatted to his chauffeur. He was small and was wearing a tropical helmet on his grey head, and held a slim tapering stick in his hand. Otherwise he was dressed, like the Emperor, in the national costume, with his black cape over his white shirt and jodhpur breeches. Later I was to see him in full-dress diplomat's uniform, but I found his ordinary clothes much more human than the uncomfortable uniform that had been copied from European patterns in every detail. The Abyssinians are not attracted by bright uniform, preferring the simple colours of their own dress and in this respect they are different from the other African races. The little Prince Makonnen makes a great fuss when he has to wear his magnificent new green, red and gold general's uniform, and is much happier in his plain old khaki suit.

I was called shortly afterwards into the minister's study. A large equestrian picture of the Emperor hung on the wall, and facing it was a simple table that had been converted into a desk by having a blue cloth laid over it; dusty old rep curtains draped the windows. There was no other furniture.

The minister sat behind his desk and his two sons, Sirak and George, who are now taking an important part in political life, were present as interpreters. George Herouy had studied at Cambridge and Sirak had just come down from Oxford. Both worked naturally in the Foreign Office without a salary and had been educated at their father's cost. The giving of this liberal education is the duty of all well-born Abyssinians to their country, although it is sometimes carried out with mixed feelings.

"My sons are my closest co-operators," explained the minister, "and they keep in constant touch with the outside world, steering Abyssinia along the road of progress, and Europeanising Ethiopian life, as the Emperor wishes. I am rather old for this perpetual work of reform, but I try to do my duty and never obstruct new plans. My sons are the leaders of the Abyssinian youth movement. They further

the Emperor's work unconditionally and pluck out and destroy the reactionaries."

My audience had only lasted a few minutes when a telephone message called Herouy to the Emperor.

"I am so sorry that I cannot speak longer with you," ran the message he left for me, "but perhaps you will come to tea at my home this afternoon."

The little Italian motor-car called for me punctually and we drove along a good private road, that had been specially built for the Foreign Minister, to the suburb of Gullali, where he lived. This was the first time that we had been fetched by car although the State has a large number of private vehicles, and after this journey I was not sorry, for if we had travelled by these cars, my stay in the country would have been a costly business. We were not far from the hotel when the chauffeur stopped and got out looking worried. He fiddled about for a little under the bonnet and then turned to us:

"I am very sorry, monsieur, but the petrol has run out."

"Right," I replied, "go and get some more. I shall wait in the car."

The man said nothing but returned to wrestle with his engine. Then he came round to me again.

"I have not any money."

Now I had got the hang of things and there was nothing else for me to do than to give the driver 11 talers, almost £1, the price of the smallest amount of petrol procurable—a tonica, or four and a half gallons. I could hardly ask for the rest of the petrol when we arrived at our destination. When I related this episode later, many of my colleagues told me that exactly the same thing had happened to them. They were called for with a government car with just enough petrol to take them to the nearest filling station, and they also had to buy a tonica of petrol for the short drive which would have cost them 3 or 5 shillings by taxi.

Our tank filled, we drove on with renewed strength, and on reaching the courtyard of the house we were hedged in

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on all sides by about twenty servants. The Foreign Minister greeted us at the door. He had with him a grandchild who wore a fine European suit but no shoes on his feet.

Workmen were to be seen, for the minister's house was not quite finished. There were other houses in the garden which was surrounded by a wall, shutting in the whole family. The minister and his wife lived in the largest house, and the smaller buildings were occupied by their children's families. Belatin Getta Herouy was obviously proud of the family that he had created, and it was remarkably interesting to see the old Abyssinian custom of an entire family living together, kept up in such comfortable surroundings.

We went into the garden where thirsty flowers were shrivelling up, and inspected the other homes. Sirak's and George's houses made it quite clear that they had studied in England. They looked like English houses and we saw innumerable fittings that they had brought back with them. There were easy chairs and the sitting-rooms were built round sham fireplaces. They had got used to fireplaces in Oxford and Cambridge and now did not want to miss this kind of English comfort, although they were 6,000 miles away.

A smaller building was announced to me as the library, and I entered it with great expectations, to find that it was indeed a library but unfortunately only an Abyssinian's conception of one. On the floor enlarged family photographs were scattered about, but the books were arranged high up near the ceiling and could only be reached with a ladder. I counted about forty volumes; the shelves were so high that I could not decipher the titles; most of them seemed to be in Amharic but to judge from the typical bindings, a few of them were English.

The "library" was the minister's favourite room. A comfortable chair was placed ready for him and here he reads and writes his books. He belongs to the select band of Abyssinian writers and publishes political works combined with travel impressions, which are produced in the Emperor's publishing

office. The majority of Abyssinian books come from this office where important educational work is done. The one and only Abyssinian paper, a small weekly, with the topical title *Light and Peace*, is printed here too. The Foreign Minister is the chief sub-editor and the Emperor is editor-in-chief. He resembles in this one respect, his famous contemporary, Signor Mussolini, who is well known as the chief writer in his own paper *Popolo d'Italia*, where so many of his articles appear. The Emperor of Abyssinia always finds time to write long didactic articles and he is proud of his journalistic activity. An American magazine that has a wide circulation once came my way, and there was an article about the Imperial journalist of Abyssinia:

"The Emperor," the article ran, "is also editor of the only Abyssinian newspaper. He dictates his own articles to the Empress who types them straight on to the machine."

I showed this to the Emperor who laughed heartily over it and remarked wittily:

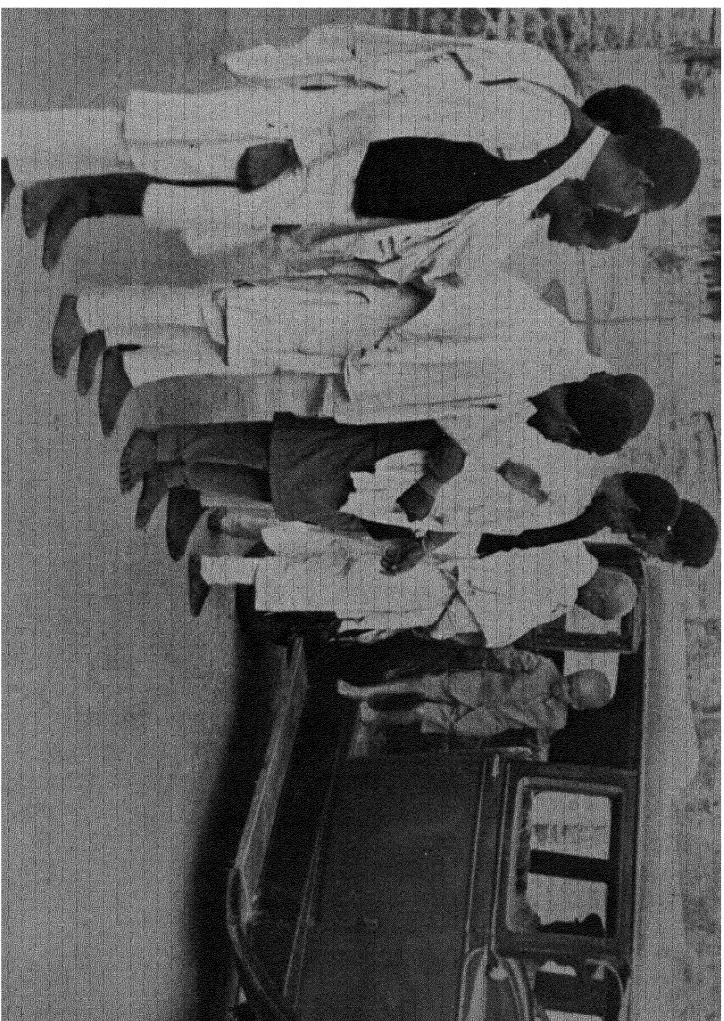
"This story about the Imperial stenographer cannot be true because typewriters with Amharic letters are not yet manufactured."

When the minister was showing me his travel books, I asked him to tell me about his foreign tours. As our interpreter had left us, Belatin Getta Herouy had, willy-nilly, to speak English, which he had been commanded to learn late in life by the Emperor. He spoke broken English, but he did not mind now, because he loved to tell people about his travels.

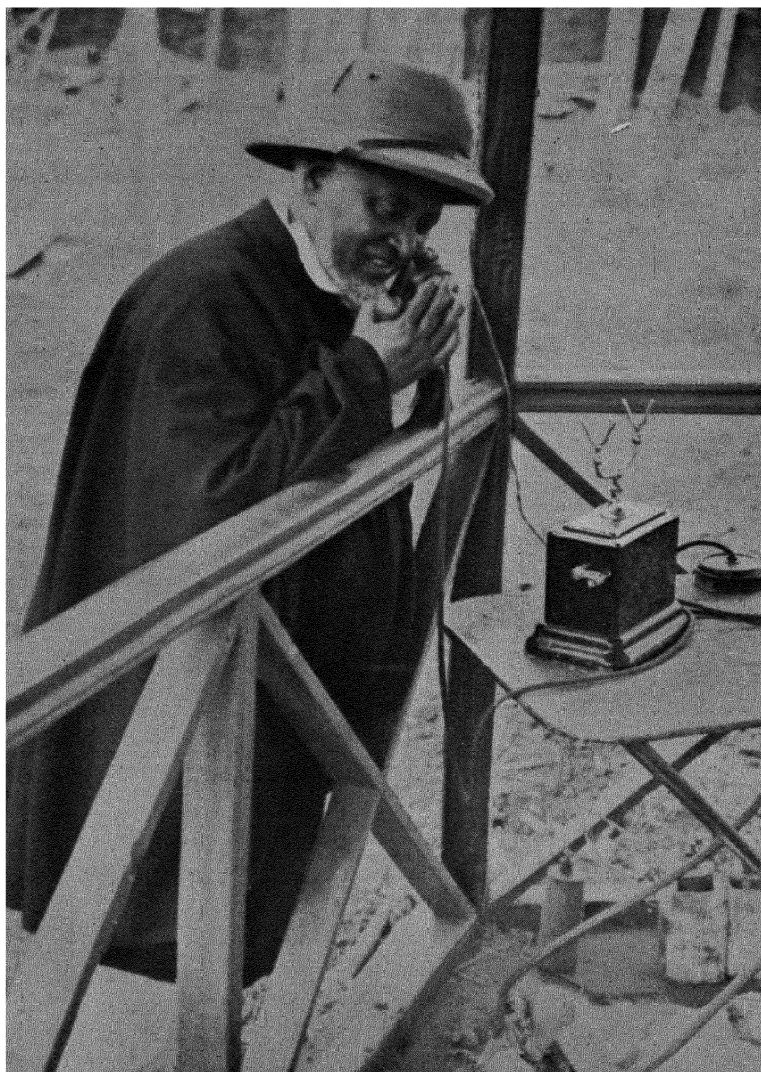
"I have been in Europe eight times, including four visits to Italy," he said smiling. "I have also been to the United States and Japan, so I have been right round the world!"

"What were you doing in Italy," I asked.

"In those days," he replied, "there were no differences of opinion between the two countries, and my visits were purely friendly. On one occasion I accompanied His Majesty, and I shall never forget the kind reception that we were given. The Italian royal family were particularly charming, and I always



HEROY'S GRANDSON WITH HIS SERVANTS



BELATIN GETTA HEROUY OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY

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remember the young Princess Maria of Savoy with very great happiness. We have always tried to keep on friendly terms with Italy, and as far as we are concerned there is absolutely no reason for the present grave problem. No one would be happier than us if the whole thing could be settled without blood being spilled. The League of Nations is still our last hope! We earnestly desire peace, but we are not afraid of war, although it is painful for us to have to fight for our lives while the great powers at the League talk about the importance of keeping peace!"

It is only natural that every conversation in Abyssinia should begin with the subject of war, but sooner or later it becomes clear that there is nothing new to be learned about that topic, and I now wanted to hear other things from the Foreign Minister.

"Your Excellency was speaking of your journey to Japan," I broke in. "It roused a great commotion at the time, and started many rumours. Why did you go to Japan?"

Belatin Getta Herouy smiled when I asked this, and he replied in a more decisive voice:

"I was waiting for that question for it is always asked; and it is not difficult for me to be quite undiplomatic and tell you the simple truth. We had no ulterior motive, and what we wanted was no mystery. Japan has been growing into one of the most influential great powers, and while all the other important nations had their representatives in Addis Ababa, Japan was not represented at His Majesty's court by so much as an Honorary Consul. It meant a great deal to us to open up diplomatic connections with Japan, and that was the primary reason for my journey.

"The second reason was purely economic. Our people are poor, and our export trade has shrunk during the last few years owing to the depression. We had to find a source for cheap everyday goods, and Japan is famous the world over as the country that sells the cheapest goods, specially cotton, which our country now imports in great quantities. We used to get

most of the cotton that we required from the United States, but as Japan can supply the same thing eighty per cent cheaper, we naturally buy our requirements from her. The hackneyed term "Japanese invasion" has a real meaning in this country, for half of our imports is comprised of cotton.

"There was also talk of a proposed marriage of a Japanese princess and an Ethiopian prince," I said.

"Fairy-tales! Goodness knows where they sprang from!" the minister replied energetically.

"It is also rumoured," he went on, "probably from the same source, that Japan is settling peasants in Abyssinia, some of whom are to work on cotton plantations and others are to become soldiers for the war that is expected. Two hundred thousand is the number mentioned. Now, I ask you, have you seen or heard any sign of this Japanese invasion in the country itself? At the moment there are not 200,000 nor 2,000 but only 4 Japanese in the whole of Abyssinia. There is still no Japanese Legation and our four Japanese guests are little merchants who have built a small shop where they sell Japanese goods to compete with the cheap Czech glassware that the Galli and Somali women like so much. As far as I can tell, this outpost of the Japanese invasion is not doing well, and its owners are thinking of leaving the country."

"Has Ethiopia," I asked, "any further interests in common with Japan?"

"We shall never have an important exchange of trade with Japan," he said, "for we have hardly anything that they can buy from us. Our first export is coffee, but the Japanese drink tea, and have enough of their own. We export agricultural goods and skins, but Japan cannot use these, so our trade is one-sided. We only buy from Japan because her goods are cheap and we have not enough money to pay for the perhaps superior but considerably dearer European and American products.

Belatin Getta Herouy's grandchild announced that tea was

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served in the house, and we left the library, and went in. There were a few public rooms, and they were rather simple, but the cleanliness and the attempts to put the furniture in the rooms that it matched best, were very noticeable, although their arrangement was not altogether successful.

Tea was served in a large room furnished only with a table and a few chairs. It was like moving into a new house and snatching a cup of tea during the removal. The table was covered with a white cloth, and the cups all belonged to the same set, which may be an ordinary occurrence 5,000 miles farther north, but here 500 miles from the equator, it is a great rarity. And so is tea. Abyssinia is the ancient home of coffee and many years ago colonisers brought the first coffee plants from here to Brazil and Java, and these coffees are often mixed to this day with the Abyssinian brand. Coffee got its name from the Abyssinian province of Kafa. The best kind of coffee is not grown there but in the Harar hills. The Abyssinian naturally drinks coffee, particularly in recent times when he cannot sell it any more. In this country the surplus supplies are not shovelled into the sea as in Brazil, but bought up by the State.

In the Foreign Minister's house I drank tea, although usually this meal is only called tea because it is the custom to drink it at this hour in England, and coffee is almost always served. It was a sign of great politeness to a European guest that we were given tea in that house. It tasted very good, and so did the tea-cakes, and if we had not had to drink talla, the afternoon would have been perfect. This talla is an Abyssinian drink that is just comparable with beer. The natives drink it for preference, and look upon it as a rare drink that it would be an insult to refuse. So with great presence of mind I drank up this terrible juice and even went so far as to praise it.

This talla and the following incident reminded us that we were in a native chief's house: there were no napkins and when the Foreign Minister had finished his tea, he wiped his mouth on the table-cloth.

CHAPTER XV

THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST ARMY

I HAD never forgotten that I had been sent to Abyssinia as special war correspondent, although it was apparent during the first four weeks of my visit that I had come rather early. This war, that I had come so far to see, would take its time, and I had to make up my mind that it was only of secondary importance, and had nothing to do with the other lesser known problems of the country. It was, so to speak, only the full-stop after a long, interesting paragraph, and I had to try to understand its meaning. I had come to hunt for information on big events, to see bloody battles, and to "experience" the highly prized death of a hero, but when I made out my balance sheet after these first four weeks, I decided that the country and its people, and the thrilling drama that was being played behind the scenes, interested me far more than war reports. Incidentally it seemed better for the moment, to look for the reasons than send information about definite events.

But in spite of this resolution I sent off quite a number of telegrams, and was one of the telegraph office's best customers. This office is one of the businesses in Abyssinia that is run really perfectly although natives are in charge. I got replies to my telegrams regularly, one and a half hours after I had despatched mine. This strange fact is explained by the difference of time in England and Abyssinia which is four and a half hours during the winter months, but all the same, telegrams took only two and a half hours to reach London.

I would have felt considerably farther away from European

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culture without this telegraph station, but as it was, I was in continual touch with the London office of Associated Press, and it is significant that I received more messages than the Government itself or the Bank of Ethiopia, and only the Italian Legation beat my record. The telegraph office was also the only Abyssinian concern that profited by the conflict. The special correspondents spread like some disease with the arrival of every train, and shortly after I came, the Hotel Imperial and the other hotels were full up. The new arrivals found, just as I had done, that nothing was happening, but they sent off their telegrams out of a keen sense of duty and occasionally out of pure boredom. Although we paid the special Press rates, and were given a fifty per cent rebate, the office made more in the first half of 1935 than it had since its foundation three years ago up till that time. The Abyssinians noticed this and soon tried to exploit this boom in telegraph messages. During days when nothing happened, we were given scraps of information by the Foreign Office in the faint hope that we would pass it on by telegraph. The black director of the telegraph office, Ato Worku, used to call on me in the morning like a traveller in books, pictures or houses, and inquired politely how many words they could count on that day. The office had its own system of ranking the journalists in Addis Ababa and at first they were dissatisfied with me, and looked upon me as an unimportant correspondent. When Ato Worku befriended me later, he explained their reason:

"You sent only eight hundred words after your audience with His Majesty, while Mr. Pemberton of the *Daily Express* telegraphed two thousand words after his interview. We thought then that Mr. Pemberton was the greater journalist, but as you have now reached four thousand words, perhaps you are more important after all!"

And they treated me like a "tillik sau"—great man. I could despatch telegrams before and after hours, and the connection with London was quite often kept open until I had finished my

message; and telegrams addressed to me were always delivered immediately they arrived. That was a reasonable and pleasant bit of service, but sometimes my friends overstepped the mark by whispering mysterious news in the office, hoping that I would send it to London at once. I never did that and for two reasons. The first was rather prosaic: telegrams cost too much, and it was my duty to save; each word cost 1s. 9d., and I seldom sent less than 150. The second was because I learned soon that all my messages came before the Emperor's eyes, and that an interpreter was among my friends at the telegraph office, and he had to translate messages of political content, and send them at once to the palace. This good man thought nothing of telling me this, but I had been warned. I went straight to the Emperor's private secretary, Ato Waldo Georgis, and asked whether there was a censorship in the telegraph office.

"We allow all telegrams to pass," he replied. "We never stop messages on the ground that they are unfavourable to Ethiopia, but if they are directly unpleasant, we stop all the reporter's activity here. The Emperor sees all your telegrams, and you will hear all right if His Majesty disapproves of anything you say."

He had, at least, spoken frankly, and I was later to be convinced that all my reports were despatched in full, when I was told that the Emperor was displeased with one of my messages. It was about a consignment of ammunition and I had mentioned the numbers of rifles and bullets that had just been supplied. I had been given these details by the Secretary of the Ministry of War, and they were quite accurate, but it was exactly this that had made the Emperor angry with me. He considered the figures low and would not have objected if I had made a small alteration in the right direction. However, the telegram went off as it was.

Just as the Italian Legation broke my record for the number of telegrams received, it despatched far more than I did. They sent off every day long messages in code not only to Rome,

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but also to as many of their forty-odd consulates in Abyssinia as could be reached by telegraph. The Abyssinian Government was unbelievably sparing with this costly form of communication. I only once saw a long telegraphic message sent off by them: that was in the middle of May, 1935, and it went to Geneva to the Secretary of the League of Nations. Abyssinia corresponds with its Legations by letter, this is cheaper and, to their mind, quite quick enough.

The days passed peacefully in Addis Ababa while the European papers announced the approaching outbreak of war in long special articles. We felt nothing of the atmosphere of a war that was obviously going to be waged, and the excitement after the recent parliamentary speech had died down. The fine words that had been spoken remained only words, for here proposals materialise long after they are made. I did not allow myself to be deluded by this temporary quiet, for after long talks with the pundits I knew for certain that I had become a spectator of an exciting and important drama. I realised that war was only a question of time, and I had long wanted to know the supers in this play who were practising with their new machine-guns on the parade grounds, and marching in a continual stream to the threatened frontier. In fact, I wanted to see the Abyssinian soldiers who were going to be the deciding factor in this war.

I asked Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera again and again, and even the Emperor himself to show me the national military organisation, but my request was never granted. Finally I tried to approach the officers of the Belgian Military Commission.

Five years ago ten Belgian officers were entrusted with the training of the Abyssinian Army. The teachers had formerly been Swiss, but their contract was not renewed because they could show no very conspicuous success. The Emperor changed his policy, and employed soldiers from countries that had had practical experience of war, but no direct interest in Abyssinia. So it was that the Belgians came to Addis Ababa. Six of the ten officers work in the capital, and four in the

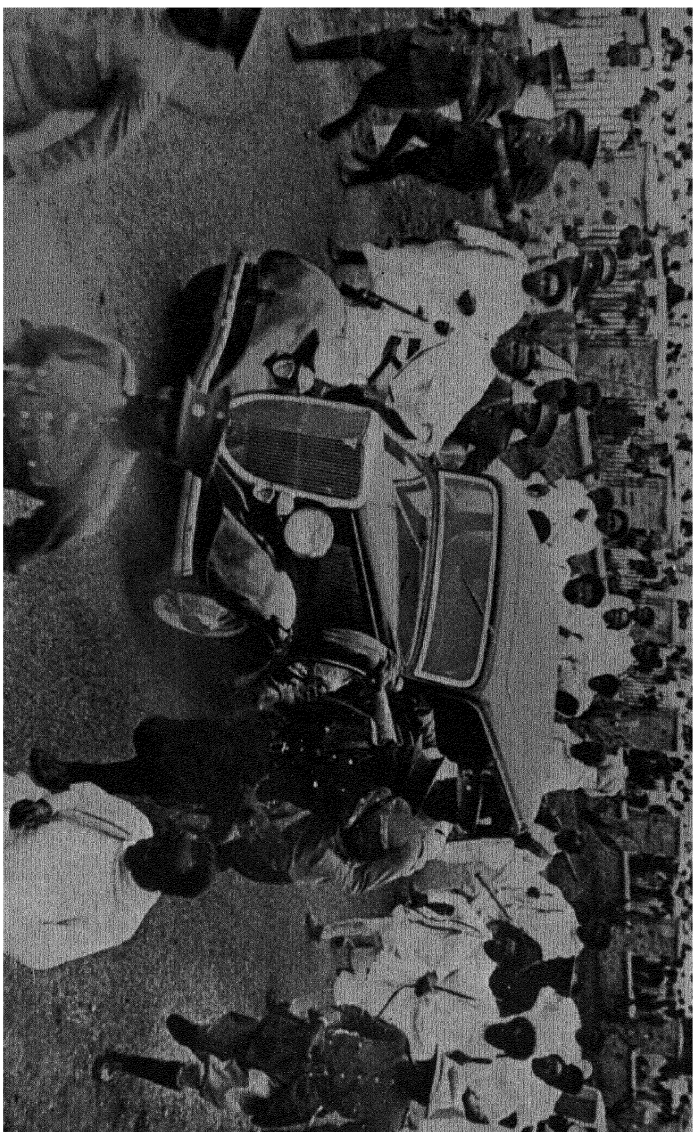
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provinces. They live together and eat together with no outside company, and they are only seen in the town as they drive past in their grand cars. They leave early in the morning with the troops for the parade grounds, which are some way off, and never return till evening. There are no secrets in Addis Ababa; one knows everybody and meets everybody, but in spite of this it was difficult to find the Belgians. These neutral soldiers have isolated themselves even more of late, and they have become genuinely shy, for they are compelled to regard anyone who approaches them either as a spy or an arms merchant. Their situation is very delicate because they have nothing in common with Abyssinia, yet they are indirectly opposing Italy, their former brother-in-arms during the Great War, by training the soldiers that will confront Italians on the field of battle in Africa. And they are carrying out their task with distinction. According to experienced military experts who have seen their work, they have turned out formidable enemies for the black shirts, as a result of their strict and energetic drill.

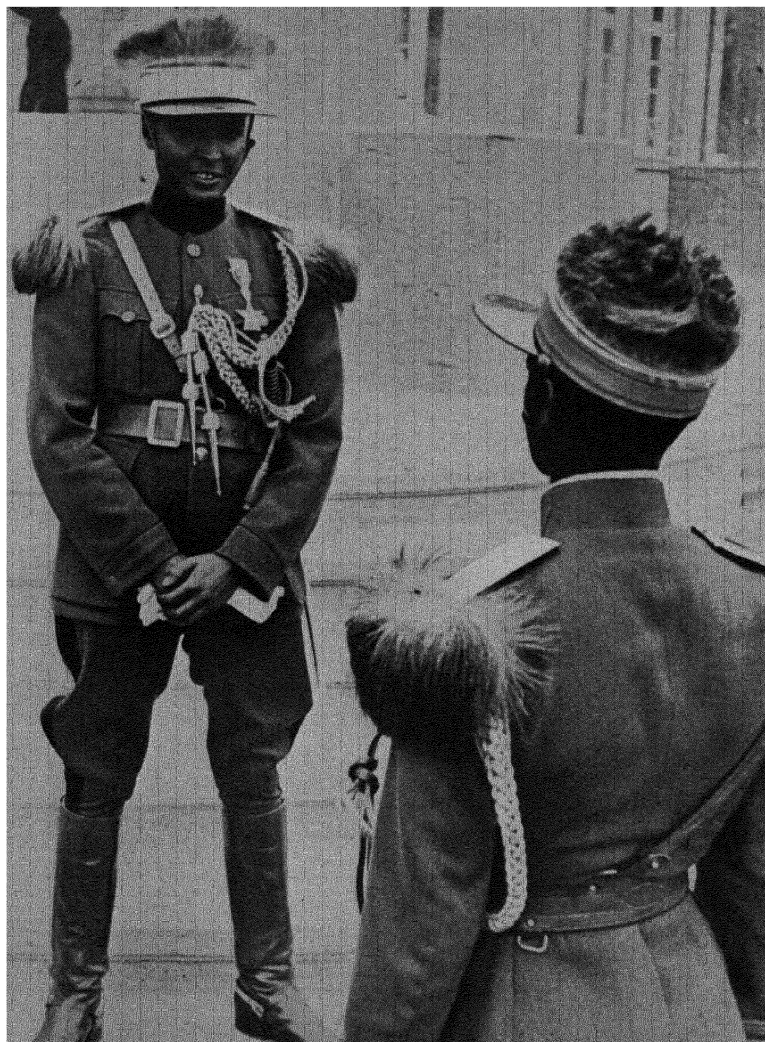
I suddenly met the Belgian officers where I least expected. The chief of the Military Commission, Major André Polet, was sitting with his five brother officers in the "Parakeet," Abyssinia's only night club. He was the object of much envy in Abyssinia because he had two great qualities: he was the youngest major in the Belgian army, and the best paid soldier in the world. He had also another distinction: he was the second tallest man in the Abyssinian Army. The tallest was another major, the Drum Major in the big military band, and when Major Polet saw this giant for the first time, he called him out and said:

"I am used to being the tallest man among my soldiers, and I cannot tolerate your being a head taller. So there is nothing else to do but to cut off your head."

The major was of course only joking with his competitor, but the giant saw no fun in it, and threw himself at the major's feet, crying for mercy.



THE EMPEROR DRIVING AWAY THROUGH THE CROWD



OFFICER OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD. UNIFORM DESIGNED BY INGIDA

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I met some friends in the "Parakeet" who knew Major Polet, and in a very few minutes I had fulfilled my long-felt desire: I was sitting at a table with the Belgians, drinking the inevitable White Horse whisky. The major was not more than forty-five, in spite of his grey hair.

"I had no grey hair when I came here five years ago," said Major Polet," although I had had no ordinary military career. For me the war was not over in 1918. After the peace treaty I went to Greece and played a certain part on that country's side in the Greco-Turkish War. After that I travelled to China to train Chinese soldiers and now for the last five years I have been chief of the military commission in Abyssinia. I have had the hardest work of all here, but it has been worth while. I will show you the Abyssinian soldiers and you can judge for yourself."

I received the Emperor's permission next morning and a few days later I saw a great review of the Abyssinian army, that had been arranged "behind closed doors" for Major Polet. His contract was up. He did not want to stay any longer in the country and his army wanted to take leave of him with a great military parade, and it was to this that I had been invited. Four thousand soldiers—infantry, cavalry and light artillery, the entire garrison of Addis Ababa—was collected on a large parade ground near the station. These soldiers were all members of a so-called Imperial Guard. In the course of time 25,000 men have been recruited to this guard, and they comprise the only regular force in the country. These soldiers are modelled on the European style. They live in barracks, wear fine uniform of the Belgian pattern but made with Japanese khaki, and caps ornamented with real lion's mane fur. Their weapons also seem to be correct. The only remarkable thing about them is that even when in full-dress uniform, they are all bare-foot. They go on the most difficult marches and tiring exercises without boots. Efforts have been made to squeeze their hard feet into leather but in vain, for the efficiency of the men dropped when foot-

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gear was supplied. Hence it is a bare-foot army that may march against the Italians.

The guardsmen's pay is 4 talers a month, or about 6s. and their keep is not included. In addition they have often to support their families with that money. The Addis Ababa police are better paid, getting about 15s. a month, but in spite of this a military career is more respected. The soldiers know that the Emperor has to pay them out of his own pocket as he levies no taxes to cover these ordinary State expenses, and they see well enough that it is no bagatelle for one man, even if he is an Emperor, to finance a whole army. So they are abstemious, eating only what they can find or beg, and living the squalid life of the front line when they are still in the town.

It is the ideal of every Abyssinian to be a soldier. Soldiering is their tradition and the youth is brought up to it. They can scarcely wait until they are strong enough to carry a rifle on their shoulders, and the average age of the Abyssinian soldiers is between twelve and twenty. That is the best age for military service in this country, for the Abyssinian is most capable and useful, and also most open to learn, in his very early years. The primitive life with its eternal hardships and terrible diseases, makes these fresh youths into spent old men, and a man in our so-called prime of life is already finished. As far as can be ascertained, the average age of mortality is between forty and forty-five. This explains why nearly all the army is recruited from classes that are regarded as juvenile in Europe.

The first military school of telegraphy was opened recently. Thirteen to fifteen-year-old recruits, who will be on fighting service within six months, learn ordinary lessons in the morning and attend this school in the afternoon, dressed in beautiful new uniforms with perfect rifles, complete soldiers.

In the officers' school at Oletta, a new generation of commanders is growing up. Only a short time ago, these boys

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were all members of the well-organised Boy Scout Movement that the Emperor founded in the autumn of 1934. Swedish officers are now in charge of the education of these children who are destined to be officers in the Abyssinian army in six months' time. I had a talk with the director of this military kindergarten, Captain Tamm.

"The Emperor," he told me, "picked these young hopefuls himself from the schools, and has given us the duty of turning them into officers in six months. Experience has proved this young material supplies very useful soldiers and if one speaks of their youth, the inevitable reply is: 'Our fathers were no older when they beat the Italians at Aduwa.'"

Abyssinia possesses the youngest army in the world but it is, according to expert opinion, a first-class force. What is lacking is equipment. The 25,000 members of the guard may have good rifles but apart from these one probably could not find more than a third of that number in all the arsenals in the country. Abyssinia has imported a small number of machine-guns lately and she is said to have between two and three thousand. There is also a small amount of light artillery, consisting of small mountain guns that are transported on Italian mules. There are two tanks, but they are too rusty to be used. A single big gun is Abyssinia's only piece of heavy artillery. This rarity was shot off by the Emperor when it arrived as a "present of love" from the French armaments firm Schneider-Creuzot. It was obviously of no real value but it was ceremoniously received. Since it was fired by the Emperor it has been only a symbol because there is no more suitable ammunition for it.

Ammunition is the Emperor's greatest source of worry. None is made in the country and he has only a few million bullets, enough perhaps for a single day's fighting in a European war. On account of this scarcity every shot is saved and even at important manœuvres before the Emperor, only fifty shots are fired. The Abyssinians only shoot when they are sure of their mark and they almost always hit,

because they are first-class shots. In Abyssinia every other shot finds its mark, and reckoning on this basis, there is plenty of ammunition.

In recent times arms merchants and the agents of the big armaments manufacturers have naturally been frequent guests of Addis Ababa, but they are not the leading lights of their business, for the large firms only send their small representatives here knowing that no very big business can be done. Arms and munitions are the things that the Abyssinians are in quest of, although they cannot often buy them, and for this reason they are only a side-line in Addis Ababa. Veterinary surgeons for instance sell mountain-guns, hair-dressers machine-guns, and a plantation-owner might sell bullets. I made the acquaintance of one commission-agent who told me proudly that he had become the representative of a Danish armaments firm and that he sold everything from safety-pins to tanks in his shop. But he had to admit that he still did the best business with safety-pins. Belgium and Czechoslovakia send agents, but a German has been the luckiest so far. He was just about to leave the country after waiting four months without getting his promised order. He invested all his fortune in this deal, and had given wonderful presents, but it looked as if he had made a bad speculation. Then at the last moment he got an order for 5,000,000 talers (£350,000) worth of armaments, which was the biggest that had ever been given in Abyssinia.

The payment for these orders is no small difficulty for the Emperor. Before there was any thought of war he bought ammunition with his own money, but now that the requirements are greater he has levied the first tax in Abyssinia. It is a general tax that compels every Abyssinian to contribute 1 taler for the purchase of weapons and munitions. The government employees had to pay an extra share: twenty per cent of their salary was lopped off for the same purpose. But that does not mean a great deal because they are not often paid.

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It was rumoured for a long time that Abyssinia had ordered 200 aeroplanes from a European power, but it is still only a waste of breath to discuss this air force. All the same I shall always remember my visit to the primitive military aerodrome because I found among the few pilots the same spirit of self-sacrifice as among the Imperial Guards.

The aerodrome lay outside the town, but it was possible to drive to it. An under-secretary of the Emperor, Tadessa Mashessa, who also looks after the Emperor's purse, is commander of the air force, and he showed us his work personally. Aeroplanes were unknown in Abyssinia before Haile Selassie I came to the throne. The new Emperor, who is an enthusiastic technician and mechanic, had a predilection for aeroplanes and as soon as he had the money, he bought a collection of old and new machines. To-day he has in service four old Pocz machines, a new three-engined Fokker, an old Fahrman, a three-engined Junker, a small English Moth, and an Italian Breda instructional machine. The race-course was formerly used for the flying ground, but the legations who were forced to give up their weekly polo match, won in the end, and the Emperor chose a piece of ground outside the town for the aerodrome. At the time of our visit there were two hangars for the whole Abyssinian Air Force.

Monsieur Corrigé, the French chief pilot and director of the Abyssinian air arm received us. The Emperor's chief pilot, a German, Ludwig Weber, was with him. The pilots stood in front of their machines, each of which was guarded by a policeman. Abyssinia has three fully-fledged pilots who obtained their certificates in Paris. These three lieutenants wore the new uniform of the Ethiopian Air Force.

There was activity on all sides. Practice flights were taking place, and it was an exciting experience to watch these foolhardy Abyssinians in their ancient machines. While I was talking to a Flight-Lieutenant called Bahu, an aeroplane appeared on the horizon. Mechanics rushed out of the

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hangars and even the policemen left their places. Monsieur Corrigé explained:

"We are expecting one of our best flyers, Captain Babitsheff, who is returning from the Eritrean frontier where he has been taking photographs at Aksum."

The aeroplane grew bigger and bigger and eventually roared above the aerodrome, circled round and landed right in front of the hangars. Babitsheff was the only occupant who climbed out, for in Abyssinia pilots all fly without mechanics. Anyone who knows the country will be able to appreciate fully what this means in a country that consists, north of Addis Ababa of mountains twelve and sixteen thousand feet high and offers no possible landing place. And as well as flying solo, they use old rattletraps of old-fashioned design that have been worn out in Europe. One little bit of engine trouble means that the pilot must land to certain death.

Captain Babitsheff had made a record flight, having covered the 400 miles flight from the frontier in three hours. He had brought a great many wonderful photographs of the fortress that stands on a rock near Aksum, and I was astounded when these military photographs were shown to me, a foreigner, afterwards without the slightest concern.

Babitsheff has become a national hero. A new record flight by him is celebrated all over the country as in England when the Mollisons, for example, achieve some still greater flight. Babitsheff is the flying ace of Abyssinia. As his name suggests, his father was Russian, but his mother was pure Abyssinian. He is the Emperor's private pilot, but Haile Selassie does not often travel by air, although the big Junker-52 is always ready to take him anywhere. In an emergency he could reach Khartoum with this plane and he quite seriously reckons with having to do this. One little detail makes it possible. The German pilot, Ludwig Weber, who is personally responsible for the machine, is the only man in the country who is paid regularly. He ought to be

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able to conclude from this preferential treatment that he may one day become the most important man in Abyssinia to the Emperor.

Apart from these few innovations the military development of the country has stuck fast in its first childhood. The people in Abyssinia have always been soldiers, including the children, never being without their sabres and their spears. The former slaves of the chiefs were at the same time warriors, and this ancient military organisation has not changed since the middle ages. To-day each provincial chief commands his own army which might number anything from ten to fifty thousand men, but they are undisciplined and know nothing of the development of modern warfare, and they are badly equipped. Usually the arsenal of each army consists of an old unusable blunderbuss with no cartridges for the simple reason that they are not made any more for this type of weapon. In fact the butt-end of the rifle is the business end for the Abyssinian. The chief weapon is the sabre which he carries on the right side, and draws with his left hand, as he usually carries a spear in the right. Among the Somali and Danakil tribes spears are poisoned, but this trick is unknown in the rest of the country. The sabre is the important weapon in hand to hand struggles and they are masters in the art of using it.

I had one opportunity of inspecting one of these private armies. Ras Kassa, the powerful but loyal petty king in the province of Fitché, had been commanded by the Emperor to call together all his followers and advance towards the frontier. Within two weeks no less than 50,000 warriors had collected at Ras Kassa's camp and I was invited to visit their chief a few days before they left. He received me in the impressive throne room in his castle, sitting on his seat of honour. The castle was nothing more or less than a large hut knocked perfunctorily together with zinc and wood, and inside, the throne room was the only habitable room, the others that belonged to the Ras's followers being occupied by remarkably

big insects. Apart from the throne the main room was furnished with some costly but filthy Persian carpets, and the only decoration was the many beautiful electric lights that hung from the roof, just as in a lamp shop. They were, of course, not fitted with current, for there is none in all Fitché. The contrast of the candelabra alongside of the little oil lamps that were lit in the evening was delightful, and in the shadows I felt myself back in the middle ages in an Abyssinian chief's castle.

The three walls that surrounded the building showed clearly that this was a ruler's castle, for triple fortifications are the right of God and kings alone and turn the poorest hut into a church or a Gibbi.

The three courtyards of the Castle of Fitché were packed with warriors. They had no uniform unless the civil dress of the Ethiopians can now be considered military uniform. This camp of 50,000 men round the castle walls made me think of past ages; it was an impressive drama, that comes once in a life-time, to watch these warriors in the light of their camp-fires. The next day Ras Kassa and his men broke camp. The most careful preparations had been made for the journey under the direction of a Greek who was occupied in times of peace as Minister of Agriculture, and was now the only European among these 50,000 warriors. I went on ahead of this huge caravan in Ras Kassa's car on a road that was as bad as it was short. After bumping along for three hours, we reached the end and awaited, in a small hut, the arrival of the army. They were, of course, marching bare-foot through the bush. The route was marked out exactly, and at fixed distances huts had been prepared for Ras Kassa and his officers, and there were also large supplies for the soldiers, principally peas, as it was a time of fast when they are not allowed to eat meat. At other times the herds of oxen that are taken along, shrink in numbers as the journey's end is reached.

The whole organisation of the caravan went without a hitch. This was due to experience and it is questionable whether

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Europeans could ever achieve such efficiency in caravan journeying. On the day that I accompanied the caravan, we in the car travelled slowly but they covered thirty miles—an immense distance even without the obstacles that confronted them.

The private army of the loyal Ras Kassa is in the service of the Emperor, and from all over the land came other irregular troops in large and small forces. The number of men mobilised in the northern and southern provinces during the last six months is put at over 300,000.

This is a considerable force but the military efficiency of the soldiers is doubtful, and for this reason the Emperor is trying to build up an organised army out of these irregular troops. The time seems ripe for this reorganisation, for most of the chiefs are united in their great aim, to protect the independence of Abyssinia. But it will be a long time before the Imperial Guard of 25,000 is brought up to 300,000, for during Haile Selassie's reign the chiefs have lost nearly all their privileges and they will not give up the command of their warriors which is their only remaining right.

When I came back to Addis Ababa the next day I was called to the officers' school at Genneth to watch a display by the cadets before the Emperor. There is also a motor road to Genneth, but it is only passable in dry weather, and even then with difficulty. The speed of our car was never above ten miles per hour, so we took two and a half hours to come to the village which is only twenty miles from the town.

A large triumphal arch welcomed the Emperor and his guests at the college entrance, and the 107 cadets were lined up in strict formation. As the Imperial car drove up, trumpets sounded and the children presented arms.

The first stage of their training over, the cadets had now to show the Emperor what they could do. The Swedish officers have done wonders in Genneth. They have turned these almost illiterate children of Abyssinia into a perfect modern military machine. They had difficult duties to perform, such

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as taking down a machine-gun in five minutes, and then assembling it again. They also staged a miniature fight in a box of sand with toy soldiers.

They rode like circus riders and at the end came a surprise: a mock battle that had never been seen in Abyssinia before. The 107 cadets were divided into two opposing groups.

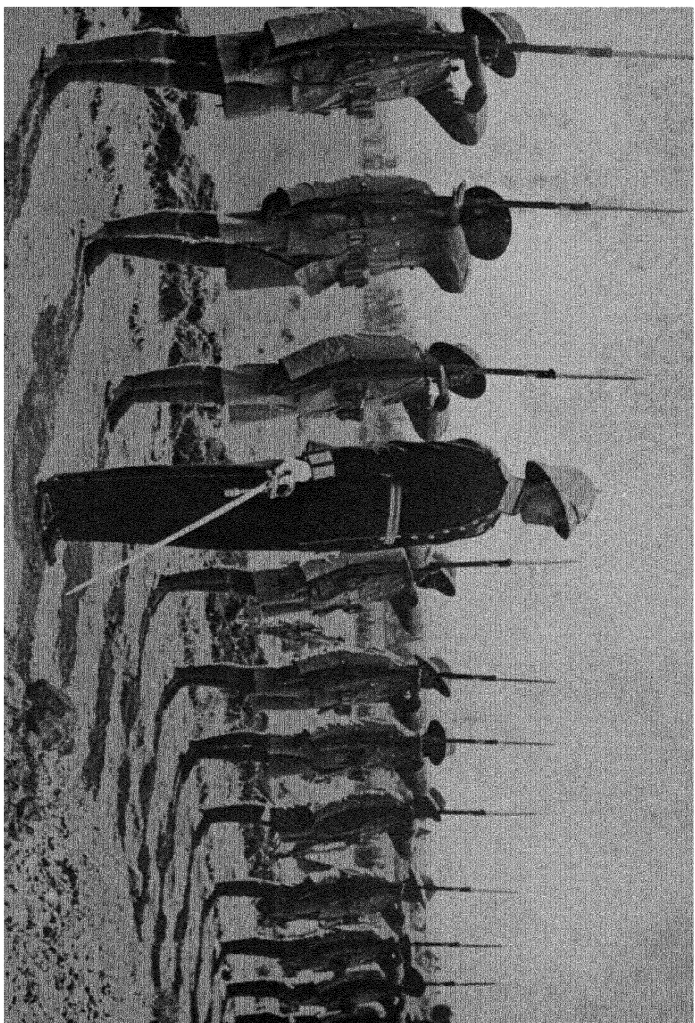
The Emperor took his place on the commander-in-chief's mound, and watched the cadets' movements through field-glasses. He stood quietly for half an hour, but after that he was obviously bored. Meanwhile the battle was in full swing, a few shots were fired, and small groups of combatants were moving up and down, unseen by the enemy. After an hour Captain Tamm announced to the Emperor:

"I beg to have to inform your Majesty that the manoeuvres of the Genneth Officers' School have ended in a victory for the blue army."

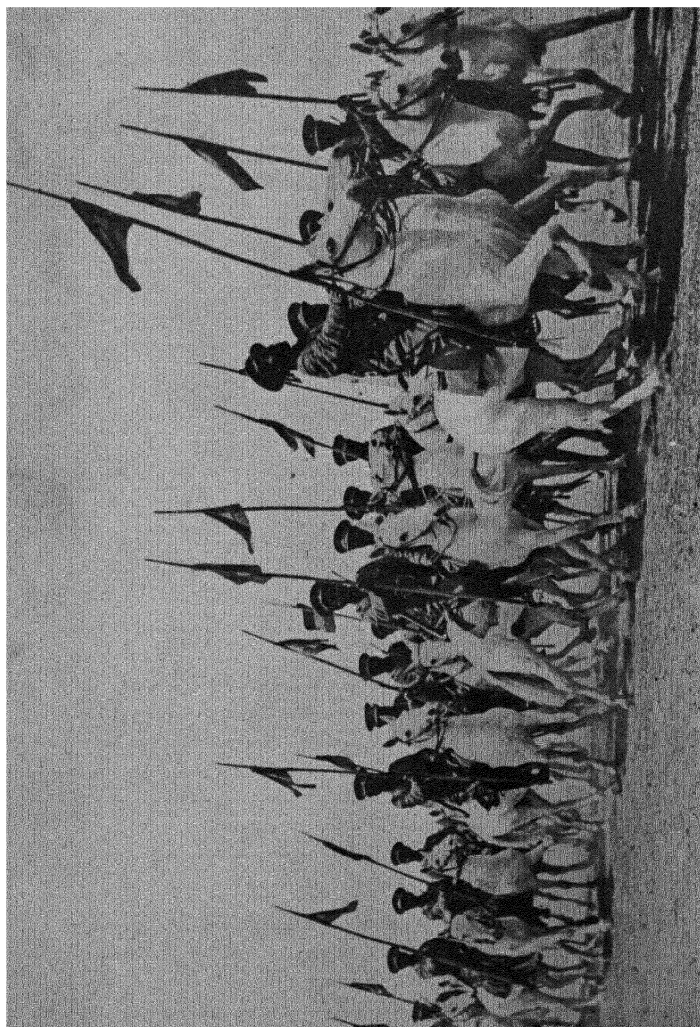
The Emperor pulled a long face. He was disappointed, and had expected the other side to win. It had to be explained to him that in modern warfare the less one sees of the troops' movements the more successful they have been. I waited behind with Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera and some of the members of the court circle. They were also dissatisfied.

"War is war," said one, "and not blindman's buff. Only cowards sneak away from the enemy. The Abyssinian fights more chivalrously, man to man, and will never fire at his enemy from an ambush."

That was the general feeling after these manoeuvres among the older Abyssinians, and the Emperor drove home irritated and dissatisfied. Perhaps he thought that the Swedes were too highly paid for this kind of hide and seek.



TRAINING ABYSSINIA'S ARMY



ABYSSINIAN CAVALRY

CHAPTER XVI

ABYSSINIA, RICH AND POOR

I HAD now spent a whole week among the military and I had tasted all I wanted of the atmosphere of war. Indeed, I felt that I had seen too much of it lately, and instead of endeavouring to get an insight into the life of the soldiers, as I had been doing, I was now thinking of excuses for avoiding these visits.

A war seemed now to be more than ever probable. News kept coming in, no longer from the south where the incidents started, but from the north. This district of Abyssinia is no longer a no-man's-land now that Ras Imru governs the province of Gojjam. He has had a wireless station installed in the capital, Gondar, the old royal town, and keeps the Emperor informed of everything that happens. But at the moment he was silent.

There was talk of an air attack, of bombs, and of 3,000 killed, and in the Foreign Office I could get neither a confirmation or denial of these reports. The Emperor knew nothing definite. The mental fog thickened, and suddenly after the past days of quiet, Addis Ababa was in a war-like mood.

My interpreter and "chief of news," Herr Löwenthal, burst into my room one day with the "latest news." He was genuinely excited.

"In three days there will be war!" he said, wiping the sweat from his brow. "Thirty Italians are leaving Addis Ababa the day after to-morrow by what will probably be the last train to Jibuti."

I envied the thirty Italians. What would happen to us

white people if the railway stopped all traffic? They would certainly have to when war was declared, for the natives would attack the train. We would all be prisoners in Addis Ababa, left, without help, to a certain death, for if the natives' hate for Europeans after the first incidents lead to window-smashing, it would know no such harmless limits during a real war.

The eager Herr Löwenthal was astonished by my sour face.

"That is surely good news for you, I thought. I cannot understand why you are not pleased."

"What is the cause of the trouble?" I asked.

"North of Gondar the Italians have bombed 3,000 Abyssinians. That means certain war. All Addis Ababa is up in arms, and the men want to start to-day rather than to-morrow."

I was off again on the hunt for news, and once again I could learn nothing from the right quarters, but at last Ras Imru's wireless began to work again.

There certainly had been an incident on the north frontier, but 3 not 3,000 Abyssinians were concerned. A servant had strayed across the boundary and had been taken prisoner by the Italian outposts. His master had tried to set him free at night, but a skirmish had ended in the death of the liberator and two other servants.

This story was too prosaic for the excited Abyssinians, and the next day I was told another version. Three thousand people were again inculpated, but they were Somalis from Eritrea this time, not Abyssinians. They were said to have escaped from the Italian colony, and had been followed by Italian aeroplanes that bombed the fugitives. I had five different versions of this story on the same day, all from trustworthy people who ought to have known better. Of course there was not a word of truth in these stories, and when I asked a few days later a member of the Frobenius Expedition that had just come from Gondar, what this incident was all about, he knew nothing, although he had left the district after it was supposed to have occurred.

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Addis Ababa is the town of false alarms. This is due to the absence of a news organisation. The news of the Wal-Wal incident reached Addis Ababa by a roundabout way through Harar, four weeks later. No news at all is sent to the capital from the south, and although the north is connected by wireless, it does not work well. All news, including Abyssinian, comes from Europe by train from Jibuti. The train delivers post once a week which the Messageries Maritimes bring to the French port. This line has a monopoly on all traffic to Jibuti, and the faster P. & O. boats have to leave their mail at Aden, which a small boat brings across to Jibuti every Monday. Post day is the big event for the Addis Ababa population. The train arrives at nine o'clock in the evening, but at half-past eight the people stand in front of the post office and wait patiently until midnight when the letters are given out. Motor-cars, mules and horses, black servants and beautiful white women promenade up and down, waiting for their mail. I had a friend in Abyssinia, a sympathetic adventurer, who had no one in the world, but always appeared punctually on Monday evening, although he had to ride three hours to get there.

"I know," he said, "that I never get any letters, but I at least meet acquaintances at the post office."

He was happy, like Charlie Chaplin in his wonderful film, "Shoulder Arms," if the others got letters from their parents, wives, children and lovers.

The Post Office is a splendid organisation, but it is principally for Addis Ababa. There is one branch in Direedawa because it is on the railway, but except for that there is no modern postal communication with the interior of the country. Although the work of the Post Office is limited, it has its own postmaster who was delighted to be able to show me over. The building is entirely European, with the different sections of the counter partitioned off, and long queues of people. The longest is always at the stamp counter; there is a continual boom in stamps, for although a letter to Europe costs only

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4 gersh, or quarter of a taler, one sticks on double that amount, using as many different stamps as possible, to please the "people at home." The Europeans in Addis Ababa have sympathy for stamp collectors, and the Post Office profits by it.

There is always a crowd standing at the registered letter counter, for it is an event for a black servant when he is sent to the post office with such a letter, and he takes his friends with him to show how important he is.

All the officials are native Abyssinians, and I was amazed by their competence and reliability. There are no European overseers. Admittedly there is not a great deal to be done, for there is no delivery in the town and everyone who expects letters must go to his own post box, otherwise he will never get them.

The Post Office does, however, try to deliver letters to some outlying districts and there is a special department for this service that is quite different from the rest of the organisation, and on that account all the more interesting in European eyes. Once a week postmen leave the capital on a long and dangerous journey, entrusted with the mail that has been sorted according to their routes. They walk about thirty or fifty miles to the next postal station, where they give up their missives to other postmen who in turn pass them on or deliver them at their destination. A letter takes at least three weeks to be delivered in Gondar from Addis Ababa and this courier service is the quickest means of communication. The postmen are regarded as "holy persons" in the interior and they have a comparatively safe journey. They have no uniform, but they are marked out by the staves that they hold out in front of them, according to old custom. Each staff has a slit at the top in which the letter are, placed, and with this in their hand their errand is quite obvious. Experiments were made with a more modern means of mail carrying, and caravans of strong lorries were put into service, but they were raided by the bandits who are always lying in wait all over the country; in fact, a gangster organisation became widespread

for the sole purpose of robbing the mail caravans. In a short time these highwaymen took valuable booty, for the vans carried packets as well as letters, and in the end the Post Office authorities had to resume the old courier system of "holy messengers," whose safe passage had been ensured by thousand-year-old customs.

The wild animals of Abyssinia do not respect the stick that is held in front of these postmen, so their mission has many dangers. But they have all kinds of tricks, indeed a regular system for reaching their goal in the quickest and safest way. The minimum equipment is taken and a basket of *intshera*, the native unleavened bread, and a horn of peas are the only provisions. They run bare-foot through bush, steppe and hot desert, and they must also be good rock-climbers, for mountains have to be surmounted. It is significant that while every child in Abyssinia carries some kind of weapon, the postmen are unarmed. The letter staff is their only protection.

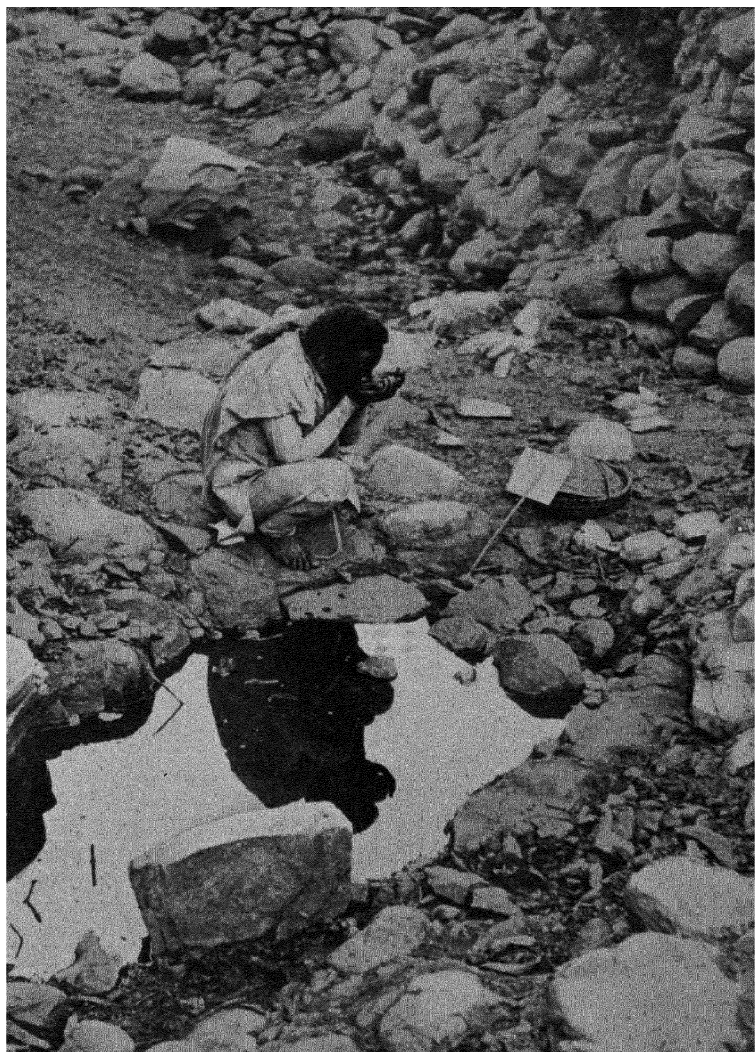
The inland postal service does not go everywhere, and important Abyssinians and the foreign legations have their own messengers, which is the only means of communication with some districts. The English Legation, for instance, has always got some couriers on the road, and they have to cover the whole distance themselves, because there is no relief organisation for them. It is often six or eight weeks before these messengers can bring back an answer. This delay increases the difficulties of the legations who are responsible for the security of their countrymen.

I accompanied a courier as far as the Blue Nile, and it will always be one of the most interesting experiences of my life. I must admit straight away that this was not a real expedition, for a passable road goes as far as the river and I accomplished the whole journey in less than two and a half days, going by mule and returning in a lorry. When the road stopped the messenger left me and continued on his long solitary journey to the American mission at Gojjam, with a letter from the American Legation. On the outward

journey we had one little incident that might have been unpleasant for us without the good offices of the "holy messenger." We took a rest every three or four hours and at one of these halts we remained rather longer than usual by a fall of good spring water. We took our opportunity to take some photographs and as we wanted to get some genuine studies, we bent over the spring to show the messenger how he was to pose. An old woman who was sitting nearby saw us bending over the water, and ran off, shrieking and praying. We did not understand her excitement, but it was soon explained when she returned from the neighbouring village with a body of Galli warriors, led by the "shum," their sheriff. We were a noisy crowd, a Tshiki-tshik after the natives' own hearts. We were accused, jostled and roared at, but still we did not know what they wanted. My courier shouted with the rest, evidently explaining something, but his voice was drowned. At long last we discovered what was wrong. The old woman had run off to the village and roused the whole population, shouting: "Come quickly! The Devil is drinking out of our spring. I saw him poison the water with my own eyes."

That made the situation really frightening. I knew that it was sometimes lucrative to hold up the Devil, and I saw no way out. Then the courier held up his letter staff and commanded the people to disperse. He went guarantee for us, but that was not enough. We had to prove that we were men and not devils. I showed my passport and the many stamps on it impressed the natives very much. The sheriff took down my name and address in case anyone in the village should be poisoned by drinking the water. If that had happened all my identification, would have been of no avail. It would have been proved that I was the Devil, and they would have come for me, or I would have had to pay a ransom.

We parted company with the courier at the Blue Nile, and returned to Addis Ababa in our lorry. The courier had still a long journey before him. He would soon cross over the



POSTMAN RESTING ON HIS JOURNEY



THE BLUE NILE IN GOJJAM

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boundary of the province of Shoa into Amhara, and after passing Lake Tana, would reach Gondar three weeks later. Abyssinia is a large country, its area four times as big as England, Scotland and Wales put together. The chief province is Shoa of which Addis Ababa is the capital. The largest provinces are in the south: Ogaden where Wal-Wal is, Kafa, Jimma, Arusi and Gore. In the north are the provinces of Gojjam, Amhara and Tigre. These provinces are divided up again into many small independent districts, ruled over by chiefs, who are more or less loyal to the Emperor. All the important provinces are under the Imperial Government, but there are outposts at every boundary who often obey their own local rulers before the Emperor. This is the cause of complications for travellers, but a little money will always carry you through.

Most of these provinces are little more than dried-up wildernesses such as Birru and Aussa, through which the Englishman, the late L. M. Nesbitt travelled. Geographically these provinces belong to Abyssinia, but they are as unimportant agriculturally as the Arabian Desert. There is very little vegetation and no trees to cast shadows, but in spite of that there are plenty of wild animals and men, who are still fierce, undisciplined warriors. Other provinces are rich and fertile, especially those in the north, which lie for the most part ten to fifteen thousand feet above the sea. On these plateaux there is plenty of life, for the climate is healthy and the ground fertile.

The excitement that had risen some days previously had not abated when I returned to Addis Ababa. Groups of citizens were still discussing the news from the north, and I found Hakim very busy in his chemist's shop.

"Any news?" I asked.

"Something is afoot," he replied. "Hall has just been here to order quinine and surgical dressings in large quantities."

"Who is Hall?" I asked.

"You don't know Hall!" The chemist was amazed. "Then you have missed something. You must go to see

him at once. Wait a minute, I'll send a messenger to find out when he can see you."

While I waited for the reply in the shop, I heard that Hakim was not ready yet to supply quinine and surgical dressings.

"I have got time and will wait until the others have sold out their stores. I have a lot of competitors, you know, and they make my life difficult. When the Greeks and Armenians saw that they could make money with a chemist's shop, they gave up their own businesses and opened new chemists' shops of their own. They palm off a lot of muck as medicine, but I am letting them have the first orders for quinine and cotton wool. They have not big supplies of real medicine and when they have sold out, I come on with my goods and I can dictate my own prices."

So the war in Abyssinia is beginning with a chemists' battle. Herr Löwenthal was evidently right in his prediction that quinine and surgical dressings were the best gauge of the war fever.

The courier returned with the message that I could go at once to David Hall. Hakim Zahn had in the meantime given me an impression of this interesting man.

"Hall has all kinds of blood flowing in his veins; some of it is Amharic. He is a tireless worker, and is at the head of important buying offices. His job is not so much the actual buying as arranging payment for the goods. The latter seems to me to be the more considerable duty in this country."

David Hall received me in his office, sitting beside three telephones and piles of papers. The telephones rang continuously and he talked ten different languages down them, ordering and appeasing, informing and denying. But he did it all quickly! And in the midst of the chaos he found time to give me an insight into the confused economic affairs of the country.

He called Abyssinia a "poor rich country," and he was right, for it has natural wealth, but it is destitute of the knowledge

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necessary to exploit this wealth. When I was in Jibuti, only a few hundred miles from Addis Ababa, I still thought that I was coming to an Eldorado and Canaan combined, where the rivers would flow with milk and honey, and where gold, oil, platinum and untold wealth could be found by digging down only a foot. Treasure-hunters come every year to Addis Ababa with the same expectations. Many of them are not just improvident adventurers: they bring a great deal of money with them, but in the end they lose everything. No one has become rich yet by promoting treasure-hunts in Abyssinia. The natural treasures of the land have remained a mystery because geologists are never given the opportunity of looking for them. Any details that circulate throughout the world about the riches that lie below the ground in Abyssinia are only vague guesses. An Egyptian engineer, for instance, whose latest name was Sahid Bey, announced in American papers that Abyssinia was a land of gold. I read myself a "copyright interview" of a United Press reporter in which Sahid Bey asserted that he had washed 2,800 grammes of gold out of the sand in the Blue Nile in less than three hours.

"Not a word of that story is true," said Mr. Hall. "The man was an evil adventurer and a cheat. He came to Abyssinia and introduced himself to the Emperor as an engineer. He was given permission by the Government to prospect, but found nothing, and fobbed us off from day to day, like all these alchemists. Eventually we grew suspicious and demanded to see his diploma. He had to admit then that he had given himself his own degree, and the Emperor had him sent out of the country."

It is true that gold is found in the sand of the Blue Nile, and that there are deposits of petroleum, platinum and other minerals, but the Abyssinians do not want to have anything to do with them. "Why should we want gold, platinum, or oil?" they ask. "They can only injure us. If Europeans discover that our country has mineral wealth they will besiege us and drive us out of the land." However, a few Europeans

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have received concessions which they have to pay for at a high rate. These concessions are only worth while for the Emperor who fixes the prices, and they are the real reason why the opening up of the country is such a risky and costly adventure. American oil companies have sent large expeditions to Abyssinia to prospect for oil, but they left the country discontented. Perhaps they would have struck oil if they had not had to wrestle with so many difficulties, that they gave up and wrote off their expenses rather than carry on.

In the south there is the well-known Prasso Concession for working the platinum mines. This is the only foreign concession in the country that continues to work, but it has no significance. Mr. Prasso returned to Europe recently to try to put his shares on the market. The concession expends more of its energy in placing these shares than in mining platinum in its primitive way. At any rate the concern has not yielded any dividends to date, and it would be well for treasure-hunters to know this before they leave Europe.

You have to buy as a concession in Abyssinia what you would get by holding a licence in any other country. I looked about myself for a concession, but I was told that they had all been sold. There was, however, one thing left, and that was the coffee monopoly. I asked what the prospects of coffee were and the agents could not give me a soothing answer. All that they could tell me was the figure that the Emperor was asking for the monopoly. They mentioned 3,000,000 talers, but they said that for 2,500,000 it would be mine. There is every conceivable kind of concession: Indian merchants have a concession for a 'bus route in Addis Ababa, but the 'buses are not running yet; an Arab has a concession for supplying electric light in the capital, but there are still only the few private plants; a Swiss bought a concession years ago for building roads, but I saw no sign of them. The Americans still have their oil concession, but they have left the country for good, and Germans are working on the Blue Nile with a concession without success. There are concessions

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to be had in this country for cotton, coffee, tea, rice, and orange plantations, but in spite of them all, quietness rules and the country is a huge cemetery of European hopes.

These concessions are some of the few sources of the Emperor's income, and he always finds new investors who are ready to put their money in these unpromising undertakings. The Emperor loves money, and as he is also a first-class business man, he has been able to save a large fortune. He is also interested in all the national commercial undertakings, and the one private banking firm in the country is his property as well as the national bank; he is also a sleeping partner in the Mohamedally Stores that have branches all over the Orient and have been transferred from Indian to Abyssinian ownership. He also loans money to his own country and charges it interest, and sells it directly the weapons, lorries and munition that it requires, for he is connected with all the merchants who supply these goods, which he no longer buys with his own money.

He banks his money in England and Switzerland, not in the Bank of Ethiopia, as every child knows, and it is said that he has enough in these accounts in case he should suddenly have to interrupt his peaceful money-making in Abyssinia.

David Hall is the broker in this curious world of finance, and after the Emperor he is the only Abyssinian man of business. The Abyssinians themselves despise trade and devote all their time to agriculture and farming, if it is possible to describe their simple activities with scientific words.

In Addis Ababa the natives lead a comparatively comfortable and civilised life, but twenty miles out of the town poverty begins. The capital offers all kinds of work, and the 5,000 white inhabitants add another modest but not insignificant source of income. The Abyssinians are not greedy; 2 to 3 talers are enough for a large family for a month, and out of that sum the father can save sufficient for a daily visit to one of the many tetsh-bars. The town workers are servants or idlers, and strangely enough the idlers seem to earn just as

much as the servants. The Guragis are the only artisans, and are occupied principally as builders.

The country folk envy the rich town from the little that they know about it. The peasants live on the high plateaux, working their bit of ground with wooden ploughs, and grazing their goats and zebus on the broad steppes, coming seldom to Addis Ababa or even to Harar or Gondar to sell their farm products and skins and furs. There are many hunters among the country dwellers, who offer for sale the skins of leopards, lions and gazelles, which are frequently ruined because the animals are killed unskilfully.

In these fruitful parts the people are still satisfied. They have at least a time of prosperity behind them, and a few years ago they were doing good business, for the Abyssinian skins were sought after, and men went round the villagers buying up their supplies. The peasants who owned coffee plantations had also no cause for complaint. The value of the taler was higher then and seven would buy an English pound. But these good times have passed; now there are no buyers and the village population is in great poverty. The Government tries to help by buying the coffee and endeavouring to sell it abroad, but their attempts have not been of much avail, and Abyssinia, with its undeveloped economic life and inhabitants, who know nothing of the great European and American economic pundits, has been encircled as securely by the same world depression.

In the years of prosperity the peasants could save some money, and usually had 10 or 20 talers tucked away in their huts. This meant a fortune to them, but it has been used up during the recent lean years, and the people are now living in the greatest want, even if they are not exactly starving.

There are also unfruitful districts, arid deserts, endless steppes, dead bush-land, and limitless forest. The inhabitants of these parts are wild primitive peoples whom merciless Nature has turned into bandits. These desert rebels lie in ambush for caravans, and after they have butchered their escorts, plunder the goods. They live on this booty, otherwise

they would have nothing. There is no restraining hand to come down on them, for the ways of the desert and the bush are not explorable, and no modern police force could bring order to this yellow labyrinth of sand.

The Emperor has sent a few punitive expeditions against the bandits, but they did not accomplish much; a large number of Somalis and Danakils were hanged, but the victims were picked out haphazard, and the real criminals almost always got off scot-free.

Roads would do more than anything else to remedy this evil, for traffic would be expedited and patrolled, and therefore safer, and the different districts would be brought into closer touch with each other.

But Abyssinia has no network of roads, and the greater part of the country is still an inaccessible and unknown region that makes the Emperor's work of reform supremely difficult. His innovations have to be brought into the interior by caravan just like any other wares, and caravans do not travel quickly.

Roads would bring about great changes, and they would be made good use of, for there are enough loads for the largest lorries, and a vital life would come to this dead world. But until roads are built, Abyssinia will remain the land of unlimited impossibilities.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DREAMY EMPEROR

SUMMER was slowly approaching. The short rainy season that usually lasts from March to May, did not come in 1935, and it had not rained once during the whole of my visit. The temperature was up to 90° and the nights had also grown warmer. On the day that the thermometers had risen to 100°, I had to put on my morning coat again; I was invited to tea at the palace.

When I arrived all kinds of Europeans and Abyssinians were waiting for the Emperor to come in. The Europeans were dressed all more or less the same, some in dress-coats, being roasted alive under their starched shirts, others in morning coats or dark suits. An ex-officer of the Imperial Austrian Army wore his first-lieutenant's uniform. All the Abyssinians wore capes of various colours, but Dedjazmatch Nassibu, the Governor of Bari, wore the sober uniform of the Abyssinian Army. He had been sent for by aeroplane by Haile Selassie and now he was surrounded by the other visitors, who wanted to know the reason why. But he did not know himself.

At five o'clock to the minute, Ato Asfou, the major-domo, appeared. He was dressed in the simple dress of the country, and after making the customary form of greeting, by shaking out his shama, he opened the doors leading into the drawing-room. The Emperor stood there, with his little dogs playing at his feet. The guests formed into line and went up one by one to shake hands with him, and he spoke a few words to each. After this reception the majority of the visitors left

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the room, and only a few of us remained. I sat down on his right and Herr Zimmermann, the special correspondent of the German official paper, *Der Völkische Beobachter*, was on his left. This journalist had with great insight presented the Emperor at his first audience with a complete home surgical box, and had asked him to pass it on to an Abyssinian officer who was going to the war. This gift seemed at the time to be premature, for no one was expecting war then, but the Emperor was delighted. It is the usual practice to give the Emperor a present when he grants an audience, and at one time gifts were so important that visitors had to bring trunks of the most exquisite things to Addis Ababa. There is a huge storehouse near the palace where the Emperor keeps all these extraordinary presents that include large tractors, a portable observatory, railway carriages, a diving-suit, and every kind of instrument. Everything lies there in chaos, and covered with rust. Behind each article are the messages of good wishes that the donors sent, in the hope of gaining some special favour. But their hopes have rusted too, just like their presents, and they have had to leave the country empty-handed.

The Emperor is not really pleased by these mammoth presents, for he does not know what to do with them. He was much more accessible to the givers of practical gifts, and fine instruments, such as a telescope, which he set up at once, and plays an important part in his life. He stands by it for hours every day, scouring the Addis Ababa street-scene, and in this way he is able to learn a great deal about the life of his people which he otherwise could only get by dressing up like an African "Harun al Rashid," and going about the town himself. A modern camera pleased him so much that he suggested an agency in Addis Ababa for that make. He has since bought three of these cameras, and is enthusiastic about photography, although he never takes photographs himself. He has a court photographer who dogs his steps and is supposed to record every important incident in his life.

Our present was very modest, but it seemed to please him.

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The photographer who came with me to the palace, had accompanied the Swedish Crown Prince on his journey to the East and Abyssinia, and we gave the Emperor some of the pictures of this journey, and some expeditions of our own, and also some photographs of prominent European figures.

The Emperor was not very interested in his European colleagues, and only glanced at their photographs. What interested him far more were the scenes of life in different countries. This was characteristic of the man, and he looked a long time at photographs of women workers in a Turkish fig factory, who were sitting on the terrace in front of the works, eating their lunch.

"Do they all sit on the ground when they eat?" he asked, and he was glad to hear that people squatted on the ground for meals not only in Abyssinia, but also in modern Turkey. Pictures of South America also attracted his attention and after peering into them, he asked for an explanation of what he had been trying to see for himself.

"What is the colour of these people's skin?"

He was remarkably well versed in the peoples of Europe, and recognised pictures of lands that he had never seen.

Ato Asfou then came in followed by a troupe of servants dressed in white. Two of them pushed forward a table on which tea was brewing in a tea-kettle over a blue flame. Others brought in large trays of cakes and tea-bread. Everything was done without a sound, for the staff are educated at the Emperor's expense in a waiters' training school in Geneva. But this time an accident happened: a silver teaspoon was dropped on the floor. The Emperor's gaze was directed on the cringing servant and followed him as he left the room to fetch a clean spoon, but this was brought in by another man, and the criminal was thrown into chains. Clumsiness before European guests amounts to high treason.

The conventions were observed, but thanks to the Emperor this reception was not strictly formal. The diplomats are always glad to accept invitations to the Emperor's causeries,

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for such entertainments are not common in Africa, and the food at the palace is good and the wine excellent. The Emperor also arranges all kinds of surprises for his guests. American song-and-dance films and the successes of the European cinemas that would not otherwise be seen in Addis Ababa, are shown at the palace; they are rented from European firms for this exclusive performance in Africa.

"How do you spend your time in Addis Ababa?" the Emperor suddenly asked us.

The directness of this question took us by surprise, and I replied with some hesitation:

"We go for walks in the town, Your Majesty."

"Walk!" he replied. "Is not that rather boring?"

"No, Your Majesty," said Zimmermann, "for you see, we get impressions."

"Ah," the Emperor replied; "he who will observe must be unassuming!"

Silence reigned for a little, then he turned to me quickly:

"Are you satisfied with Blatta Kidane?"

Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra was still my constant companion and he fulfilled his duty faultlessly, especially in comparison with my first guide. I was not going to be sparing with my praise and said:

"I am very satisfied, Your Majesty."

The Emperor became thoughtful and was silent for a short time. Then he bent forward and in an undertone:

"If you were really satisfied then I would be satisfied."

He knew well enough that his servants were not worth much and it was just as clear to him that there was no one, even among his ministers, he could depend on when real work had to be done. This atmosphere of suspicion did not help his relations with his ministers, but they feared him, and if the Emperor wanted something finished, he had only to use a threat. I saw an actual example of this. After my conversation with the Emperor, I was asked not to send off my account, until I had been given from the Foreign Office a

word-for-word translation of what we had said. This translation was promised for the same afternoon, but of course I got nothing. There was still no sign of the translation the day after, and on the third morning I demanded it summarily. Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra was astonished at my complaint.

"You have not got the translation yet," he said. "That is curious. The Foreign Minister told His Majesty to-day that he had sent it to you yesterday!"

He called up Ato Tasfai Tagegné at once and spoke to him heatedly. Within an hour the translation had been delivered.

"I threatened him," he smirked, "that if the translation did not turn up in an hour's time, I would tell the Emperor that he had lied to him. And you see it has worked!"

Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra was one of the few dependable Abyssinians, and belonged to the "Brains Trust" as I called the small circle of the Emperor's young advisers. This term pleased the Emperor.

"My 'Brains Trust' does not have an easy time of it," he told me, "for I am a hard chief to work for. I have so much to do in Abyssinia. I want to build schools and hospitals all over the country and many other pet plans that I shall be able to carry out some day, perhaps. I also want to have a free cinema for the people, and if I chose the films, I think that they would learn a lot from it."

It was interesting to hear the secret dreams of this Emperor. But he did not indulge in his dreams for long, and a shadow passed over his face when he changed the subject.

"I am often reproached in Europe for allowing my country to remain uncivilised, but those people who accuse me do not know Abyssinia, and allow themselves to be misled by biased books and bad films, many of which are made not in Abyssinia at all but in the brothels in Jibuti. They do not know that I am trying all I can to modernise my country, but it is not possible to do everything in a day. And now, just when I

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have removed the internal obstacles that prevented me from accelerating the country's development, the people who made these reproaches force me to spend the money that I had saved up for schools and hospitals, on munitions!"

The Emperor does not often speak so openly to foreign journalists, but when he does so, it means that his cup of bitterness is full. We felt that the reproach that had been aimed at the Emperor had boomeranged, indirectly, on us.

It is indeed no light task for the Emperor to put his plans into action, for the country has little money and it is only since 1926, when the national bank was founded, that Abyssinian affairs have been run on sound financial lines. This bank, that was modelled on the Bank of England and run with the help of English advisers, issued the first banknotes in the country. At first the experts thought that the attempt would prove hopeless, as the natives would never give up their "birr"—silver. The Abyssinian coinage is the Maria Theresa talers that are still minted in Vienna for the people of the Orient. This is the commonest coin, for the taler pieces with Menelik's head on them have all vanished, not because the old Austrian Empress is more beloved than Menelik, but simply because the latter had a considerably greater value.

However, paper money was established in Addis Ababa and it is even possible to change it in Gondar and Harar without any considerable loss, but in the rest of the country it is not negotiable. Outside the towns nobody will accept banknotes, and even the nickel coins of the Bank of Ethiopia are valueless. That is quite understandable if one knows that the Maria Theresa taler has a higher exchange value than the ordinary taler. If you change £1 at the Bank of Ethiopia, you are given 14 talers, but the Indian money-changers in Harar allowed me only 9, and the lower rate is indicative of the intrinsic silver value of the coin. Since the trouble with Italy began, the taler on the French exchange rose in value from one day to another, and within a week the rate had increased by a hundred per cent, which meant that

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while I got 4 francs for 1 taler in Addis Ababa, I would have had to pay 8 francs for 1 taler in Jibuti. The Bank of Ethiopia was powerless to stop the boom in silver among the natives and the Diredawa branch was even forced to charge a ten per cent tax on exchange business, to compensate for its losses a little. When I wanted to change into cash a 10 taler note there they only allowed me 9 talers in silver.

During this time I witnessed a real run on the Bank of Ethiopia. The people queued up at the counters, all wanting silver for their notes, but when they saw that it met all its commitments, they grew tired of waiting and went off with their paper money.

A bad case of smuggling resulted from this silver boom, but it was frustrated by the frontier guards. Some local Greek merchants in Jibuti wanted to exploit the boom and take the straight road to fortune, in spite of a law forbidding the export of money out of Abyssinia. They came to Addis Ababa and with the help of some ninnies, changed 100,000 worth of paper talers into silver. They transported this money by caravan to Diredawa, by a little known route, where two lorries awaited the load. The Greeks had engaged twenty Somalis whom they had armed with new rifles and a machine gun, to protect the booty.

Everything was arranged quietly so that the expedition would not be seen in Diredawa and could take the road to Zeila and from there to Jibuti; but when the lorries had left Diredawa the customs authorities heard about the secret transport and sent a wireless message to the garrison at Harar. A thousand soldiers were sent from there after the smugglers and the procession was soon overtaken. A fierce fight ensued, for the Somalis guarded their precious load bravely, and they realised too that arrest meant death. The Abyssinians naturally won, and the whole consignment came into their hands. The Greeks had remained in Addis Ababa instead of travelling with the caravan, expecting to travel to Jibuti by train later, in time to meet the lorries. A trustworthy

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Armenian was the only European who went with the money and he was killed in the fight.

If they had been successful these Greeks would have made within a short time 300,000 francs. They had changed in Jibuti 490,000 francs, which was everything they had, into Abyssinian notes, and took this money to Addis Ababa, where they got 100,000 silver talers. When they returned to Jibuti the exchange was so favourable that they might have got 800,000 francs for this sum. The Abyssinian authorities realised that this could happen and that is why they forbade travellers to take silver talers out of the country. I wanted to take 2 talers out of Abyssinia as a souvenir, and I had to get a permit from the Ministry of Trade which was only granted after some difficulty.

The story of this smuggling adventure was soon known all over Addis Ababa and the two Greeks became famous. But the Abyssinian authorities were helpless as they had not the right under international law to arrest them or to drive them out of the country. It was soon common knowledge that neither of them had lost anything in the unsuccessful transaction, as they had not been working with their own money. The real unfortunates were the persons in Jibuti who had formed a syndicate, some giving up all their money. They had lost every penny. The Greeks had made sure of their share before the caravan left Addis Ababa, and many have good reason to believe that it was they who reported the matter to the authorities to get some more money out of the Government.

At any rate they showed no sign of repentance and were met every evening in the "Parakeet." They drank champagne there, and for a while Marika, the only star in this café, was reserved for them.

This pretty girl was one of the celebrities of the town, and she was a respected figure in spite of her rather questionable profession. Her father was a Greek and her mother an Abyssinian, and she herself looked like a dusky chorus girl in a

Paris revue. She was slim and had a neat head, with shining eyes. Her lips and cheeks were too brightly coloured, and her finger-nails were heavily lacquered, but her clothes were very chic and they were genuinely Parisian. She owned a comfortable house outside the town where she had countless servants and horses, but she never received men there, living a secluded respectable life, and everything was so magnificent and above board that one could easily have believed that she mixed with princesses of a royal house. Such a double life is only possible in Addis Ababa, where the European forgets his morals and the Abyssinian has never had any.

There are innumerable native bars in Addis Ababa and it is the duty of every European to visit them. I was persuaded to follow the practice and on the same afternoon that I had drunk tea with the Emperor, I was drinking tetsh in one of these native dance bars. The contrast was tremendous. We were conducted by a servant down dark alleys to the military quarter where there are streets of tetsh bars. This is the Yoshiwara of Addis Ababa. The geishas are attractive Abyssinian girls; they vary in number from one to five according to the importance of each bar, and it is not difficult to get introductions. A dirty curtain with a red cross on it hangs across the door.

The bar that we visited expected us, and looked quite clean. We were received by the hostess, an old Abyssinian woman: the mothers of brothels are alike all over the world.

The bar consisted of one room, which seemed crowded when we entered. We counted four girls and four men besides the two musicians, who held their curious Abyssinian fiddles and a tin enamelled pot that served as a drum. We sat down and waited anxiously for the show to begin. Our eyes only gradually grew accustomed to the half-darkness of the room and when we had become used to it we looked at the girls. They were no beauties, and what struck me most was that they did not wear coquettish clothes, but the rough securely fastened dress of the Abyssinian women. Later

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when they were "in the mood" and danced to the exciting music, they put off the loose garments that they wore over their clothes, but their high-necked dresses still concealed their figures from inquisitive eyes.

We were sitting in silence drinking our tetch, when one of the musicians burst into a terrible song, no doubt to the best of his ability. It was his own composition and must have been very comic, for everyone roared with laughter. Then he played what was apparently an exciting tune, for the women suddenly became lively and went one after the other into the middle of the room to give a display of Abyssinian dances which were quite as monotonous as the music. The women stood in one place, shaking their shoulders like epileptics, so that we were alarmed rather than amused.

And that was all that the Abyssinian bars had to offer European visitors. I have often thought that warlike peoples had no imagination, and certainly I looked in vain for a natural art among the Abyssinians. Their jewellery is copied from the Arabs, and their painting lacks the brightness that one expects to find in the work of primitive races. They have no songs, and their music is monotonous. The only artists among them are the Hararis who make wonderful wicker-work, but they are more akin to the Arabs than Abyssinians. Their lack of imagination was emphasised in this wearisome bar, and I came to the conclusion that dreams must take the place of imagination. Their dreams are supposed to exhort them to battle, and if they can find no human enemies they fight against hyænas and lions, and Indian leopards and elephants. They feel more at home in the field of battle than in the bars.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MUNITIONS CARAVAN

VISITORS to Abyssinia usually spend only a short time in the capital, preparing caravans, or getting permits and buying game licences from the authorities. The town has always been a place of passage. Quite a lot has been written about it, and I brought all these books with me, and studied them earnestly. None of them made a thorough survey.

Addis Ababa has become an important part of Abyssinia since the accession of Haile Selassie I, and has developed considerably during the last five years. I have spoken with people who have returned to the town after being away five years, and they could hardly recognise it. The development was not seen outwardly, for progress, architecturally, has not been great, but it must be realised that Addis Ababa has been growing more and more significant during these five years, and has fully earned the title of capital.

The political problems of the land and its future must be studied in Addis Ababa. It is possible that five years ago the reverse was the case, for the petty kings were still powerful then, and five miles out of Addis Ababa a wild mysterious life began. The petty kings no longer hold sway and those who are still tolerated are under orders from the Emperor. I drank White Horse whisky with Vichy water, 180 miles from Addis Ababa, which would have been impossible five years ago.

It was certainly not dangerous to travel into the interior. Weapons were taken, but seldom used. Any shots that were fired were at game, which is very plentiful. In the south, leopards, lions, gazelles and antelopes and other animals of

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the same families are to be found, and in the chain of lakes that begins on the Kenya frontier with Lake Stefanie and ends with Lake Zwai, there are hippopotami.

Usually only a few of the Somali tribes are really dangerous. Some of them, especially in the southern provinces, still have barbarous customs, and the men are not allowed to marry until they have killed at least one foreigner and have cut out the victim's genitals, which they wear round the waist as a trophy. It is only natural that the young men of these tribes are always on the warpath for a victim, to make them eligible in the eyes of their future parents-in-law, and they are not particular whom they kill. As a result of this, these tribes once lived in an almost perpetual state of war. But the vile custom has recently been dying.

Now circumstances have changed again, and nearly all the tribes who had come to be peaceful are excited and unsafe for white people to meet. This unfriendliness is caused by the threat of war, which is looked on as an actuality by these simple tribes, who do not understand the finer points of politics. A year ago it was not unheard of to travel without arms, but to-day rifles are very necessary. Although the Emperor has closed the interior to foreigners, in fear of untoward happenings, almost all parts of Addis Ababa are still open to Europeans, and it was no special privilege that I had been able to inspect so many interesting things. When I had only a little time left I had still much to see. I happened to mention this to the Emperor, who was delighted at my thirst for knowledge, and charged Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera to show me the cultural life of the town.

We went first of all to the schools. At some street corners children squatted round a priest, whose only distinguishing mark is his turban-like headgear. These are the church schools and the children chant the same tune over and over again as they learn to read. But Addis Ababa has also modern State schools with a modern system of education. The biggest of these is the Menelik School where the children are taught in

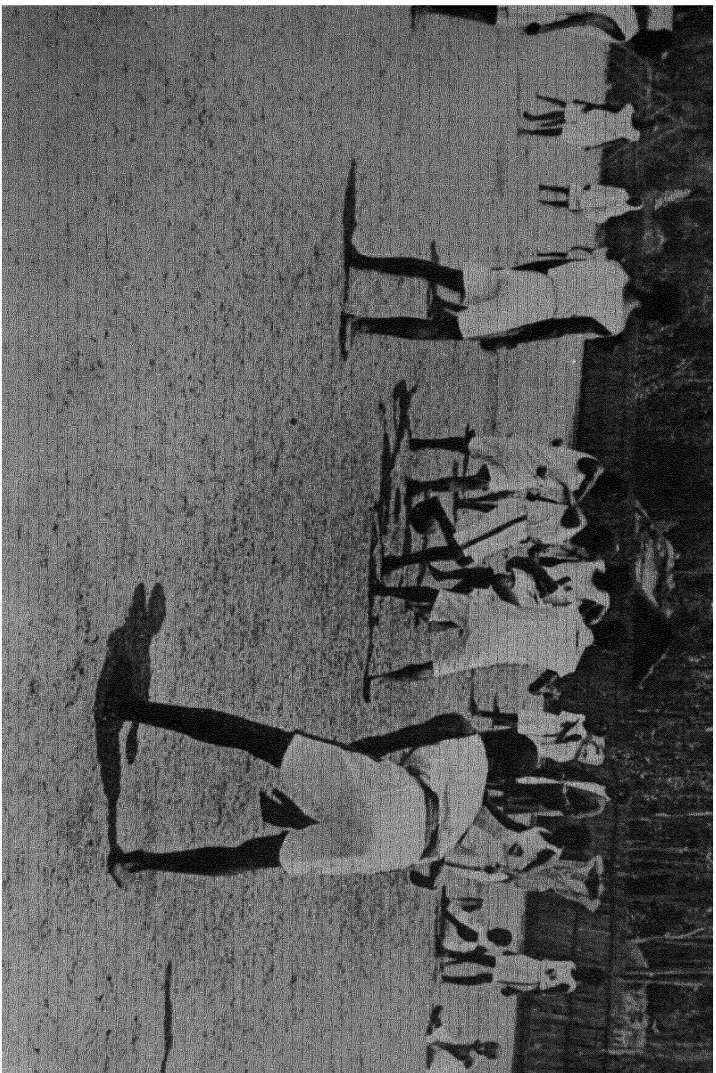
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English, and Amharic is only one of the subjects to be learned. I met 150 pupils in this school and they could all speak fluent English. I spent some time in the classrooms and was able to conclude that although they were well versed in languages, history and geography, they were not interested in mathematics. This made me think of my own school days and increased my sympathy for these black children.

The headmaster was a young Egyptian. The Abuna had brought him to Abyssinia after an English education, and had transformed this Abyssinian school into an English college. Games are important here, too, and while I was talking to the headmaster, sports clothes were handed out, consisting of white shorts and shirts with the Abyssinian colours on the breast pocket. The corners of the square in front of the school were used as open-air changing-rooms, and in a few minutes the pupils were lined up ready to demonstrate their prowess. The gymnastic display lasted an hour; they vaulted over parallel bars, did pull-ups on the horizontal bar, performed physical exercises, played at tug-of-war, and to finish off with a flourish played a football match, naturally in bare feet.

I was particularly impressed by this sports display, for I had tried in vain to see a tennis match during my visit. The Europeans do not play sports much because of the climate, and for the same reason, the weekly polo match, organised by the English Legation, is not well supported.

Education is not overshadowed by games in the Menelik School. It possesses the only theatre in Abyssinia, a big zinc shed: and the pupils performed a folk piece in English for my benefit. We sat quite alone in the auditorium, and could only follow the play with difficulty, because the stage of this unusual theatre is not lit. Though the building is wired for electric light there is no money for fuel to work the dynamo. The Abyssinians are first-rate actors in real life, and can hide their feelings with great cleverness, but they are miserably incompetent on the stage. Once again I saw that they are a war-like race without imagination.



SCHOOLBOYS PLAYING FOOTBALL



HOSPITAL PATIENT PAYING IN BULLETS

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The Menelik School had a pleasant curriculum, starting with lessons and ending with acting, but the second school that I visited, which is called after Ras Makonnen, the Emperor's father, worked on more sober lines. Here the pupils are taught in French, and its strong points were the chemico-physical laboratories. The children also had the use of a comprehensive library; containing many good French books which were read eagerly. The headmaster told me two stories about the school benches. One was that the Emperor used to come into the classrooms on holidays and sit on the forms for hours on end, in deep thought; the other was that the benches had not yet been paid for. The teachers had also not been paid their salary for the past six months, and they seized the opportunity to tackle Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera who was with me, and remind him of this. For Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera is a director of the Ministry of Education.

I was not allowed to inspect the girls' section at the Ras Makonnen School.

"Come to-morrow," said the Amharic in charge, "and we will have it clean for you. It is like a pigsty just now, and the Emperor would be furious if we showed it to you like that."

I was rewarded for patience by seeing a completely clean European girls' boarding-school. It is named after the Empress Manen and it is the most modern of the three schools I visited. The dormitories impressed me most of all. They were hygienic and tidy, and a Swiss Pensionat could not have been more comfortable.

The 400 children that I had seen in these three schools represented the whole of modern Abyssinian education. That is little enough, but it is at least a beginning, and the Emperor hopes to have at least thirty similar schools in ten years' time. The next months will show whether these plans will materialise.

From the Manen School we went to the Imperial Hospital, where I had met the Empress. It is the biggest in the country, and has "walls" for 800 patients. It is, you see,

planned to hold 800, but the building is not finished, and the completed part has only room for thirty beds.

An operation and the nurses' roll call were staged for our benefit.

"Everything that you see here," said the hospital chief, Dr. Kurt Hanner, a Swede, "is paid for by the Emperor out of his own pocket."

He showed me over the building which was well fitted and scrupulously clean. There were modern sunlight and other radiological plant, independent light and water supply, and an operating theatre.

"There is no better-equipped hospital in Africa, even in Egypt," Dr. Hanner told me. "It is sad that the Emperor's money must be used for other purposes now. This hospital has been the dream of my life, and I was just about to see it materialise. The Emperor was going to supply the necessary funds for further developments when this confounded dispute with Italy interrupted, and now the money that was going to have been used for medical and surgical apparatus, is being spent on bullets."

Bullets are important factors in this hospital. I watched Dr. Hanner's first nurse, who looked charming dressed in a light blue uniform and a white cap over her shiny-black face, bandaging a slight wound for an Abyssinian native. He had been seven days coming to Addis Ababa and his wound had nearly healed on the way. The nurse knew her job, and the wound was soon dressed. The man was sent off to the secretary's room to pay, but it turned out that he had no money, so he settled the fee with four bullets, and his troubled face as he drew them out of his pocket, showed how much they meant to him. Bullets are scarce and expensive in Abyssinia.

There was a crowd outside the large zinc building that served as the out-patients' clinic. There were about a hundred Shankala children from Beni Shangul, the sons of poor despised niggers. They had travelled for fourteen days to be inoculated against smallpox. They had arrived naked, just as

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they lived at home, but in the town they had put on coarse sacking that was obviously uncomfortable. The nurses inoculated them one after the other, with great skill, and immediately they had been treated they set out again for home.

This scene was symbolical of the new Abyssinia. These hundred children were only the start; the next day hundreds more would arrive.

While we were outside the nurses had prepared the operating theatre. They washed and put on overalls and I watched fascinated as they scrubbed their hands which remained black in spite of all their efforts.

Two strong nurses brought in the patient, an Abyssinian. He had appendicitis. The doors were closed, and the anæsthetic mask applied; the patient counted in Amharic and dropped off into unconsciousness. The white doctor and his black assistants then worked together in perfect harmony. The theatre sister handed the instruments to the doctor with precision; everything proceeded as smoothly as in a European hospital.

Suddenly a black messenger appeared at the window of the theatre, gesticulating wildly, and pointing at us, but he could not be heard through the double windows. In desperation he wrote down his message on a scrap of paper. He had brought a command from the Emperor that we had to go at once to the customs house at the station.

Heavy black clouds hung in the sky and rain was expected every day. We felt just as strained as the atmosphere, as we were rushed along in a car to the station. Columns of soldiers of all classes were to be seen everywhere, their commanders shouting orders at them. The Emperor whizzed past in a closed car without a number plate, with mounted soldiers galloping behind as an escort. The district was closed to unauthorised people.

The Customs yard gates were open. Inside troops were crowded together while others streamed in. At the back of the yard was the Customs house. In front of this sat the

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Emperor under his red parasol, the symbol of his power. The War Minister, the Minister of Trade, and other courtiers, were with him.

What had happened in Addis Ababa, and whom was the Emperor expecting at the station? What were all these soldiers doing, and why was everyone so excited? I heard that a munitions train was expected from Jibuti. It was bringing the largest consignment of weapons and ammunition that had ever been ordered by Abyssinia. These were the vans that I had seen on a siding at Jibuti.

Shrill whistles sounded in the distance and we heard the snorting of the engines and the hollow clank of the wagon wheels. The Emperor and his train stood up and the ammunition received an official welcome.

The train rolled slowly into the station. Soldiers quickly took up their posts at the vans, and when officials opened the sealed doors, we could see large boxes. The order that had been kept till then was at an end. Everyone was talking and gesticulating, mounted soldiers rode in among them, and policemen tried to quieten them with their hippopotamus whips. The soldiers made a cordon with their rifles, and behind this the native warriors were allowed to watch the ammunition being unloaded.

In a short time 8,000 boxes had been arranged carefully on the ground. The contents had come from Belgium and the packing was a masterpiece, having been done according to a special plan of Major Polet's. He had given special consideration to the difficulties of transport for he knew that once war broke out, for lack of roads and railways, munitions would have to be transported to the battlefields by wearisome caravan journeys. Each box contained 750 rounds instead of the usual 1,250, so that a man or the thinnest donkey could carry them. Each box was fitted with a handle for convenience in lifting.

The Arab workers had by this time unloaded larger boxes in each of which were packed twenty-five 7.5 calibre Mauser

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rifles, made in the Belgian F.N. works. Eight hundred of these boxes were quickly unloaded.

A particularly strong military guard had been posted beside two other vans, which the State Minister for War, Ilmar Mangasha, had opened, and picked men were unloading the contents. This was a consignment of 400 machine-guns from Czecho-Slovakia. Big armoured troop-transport cars were being pushed out of other wagons, and in less than half an hour, the whole train was left empty on the lines.

After the Minister of Trade had checked the papers, he announced to the Emperor that everything was in order, and Haile Selassie breathed a sigh of relief. This transport train had been a long time coming, for although it had been accompanied by international permits, it had been held up in Jibuti. Why, no one could say. Eventually the Governor had been pressed by the firms concerned and had let it go, but there was still another supply at the French port and goodness knows when it will arrive.

Even the sun's interest seemed to be aroused and it suddenly came out and shone on the white boxes which the porters were going to carry off to the frontier. Some of them were despatched to the aerodrome to be flown at once to the north. The porters were still busy arranging the boxes under the surveillance of heavily armed soldiers of the Imperial Guard. The Emperor strode up and down inspecting the mysterious rows of munitions, and all the while lorries were being loaded with the boxes. They stood in a long line with the Emperor's black car at the head. He was conducting the operations himself and would lead the transport column personally.

No sooner had the Emperor left the customs yard than commands were shouted out and the porters fell into file, one box of ammunition between each pair of men. The Minister for War gave directions as he rode about on horseback. Every man was in his place. The noise was deafening but everything went without a hitch. Right in front of the procession, almost out of sight, the Minister for War rose up

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in his saddle and waved his staff once, and one line of porters picked up the boxes and placed them on the heads of the porters in the other line; twice, and the column of loaded porters advanced slowly to Jimma Road.

We stood spell-bound as this surging crowd marched forward. We felt out of place in this Abyssinian atmosphere and were amused by the thought that we were representing the white races among these 10,000 black Abyssinians, as they jubilantly welcomed their ammunition. Against us white men they require these rifles, machine-guns and bullets, and we had been summoned as the correspondents of important papers to see that Abyssinia had its war material and was not unprepared for a foreign invasion. That was why the Emperor's messenger had come to the operating theatre and ordered us to the station.

Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera, who had left us to celebrate this curious Abyssinian festival among his fellow-countrymen, reappeared.

"His Majesty has permitted you to accompany the caravan along the Jimma Road."

We left the capital with the procession and Gibbi was sinking into the distance as we marched quickly past the eucalyptus woods. A company of guards went in front, followed by the 8,000 porters, the whole forming an impressive army. The lorries lumbered along behind, and another company of guards brought up the rear. All the officers were Abyssinian, and apart from us there were no white faces. The porters carried the boxes on their shaven heads. They had 300 miles to go and for four weeks they would have to march along with the ammunition that was awaited anxiously by the soldiers. Men are used in preference to beasts in Abyssinia for they have longer staying powers than camels or mules. Animals can last for six or eight hours at the most spending the rest of the day grazing, and at night they are useless, but men take a handful of peas with them to quell their hunger, and march day and

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night, not expecting water for two or three days on end.

I wanted to study the different types among the porters and passed down the columns. The majority were young men, but I noticed a few children and old men. One old fellow was carrying two boxes on his shoulders, but the children carried one between two. A few Abyssinian Amazons were also doing their bit although they had been forbidden by the Emperor to join the ammunition train.

The porters sang soldiers' songs which were translated to me. They had never been written down and were chanted by a poet and the singers followed his lead. They sang heroic ballads. We could never catch the tune which was the usual high-pitched falsetto and sounded strange and unmelodious in our ears, but the Abyssinians were obviously spurred on by it. As we approached the mountains the songs resounded still louder.

Next morning we came to the end of the road and the difficult part of the march began. These roads, which are little more than tracks, determine the conditions of war, for this primitive network of routes would make modern warfare simply impossible. But the Abyssinians are not handicapped by these rough tracks for as there are only two good roads in the country, of a total length of 200 miles, they are not used to anything else.

One of these roads is called the Jimma Road, the other goes from Diredawa to Harar. Both of these roads were well built and are repaired regularly. There are of course a few other roads, such as the one between Oletta and Arusi, but they are only passable in dry weather, and after the smallest rainfall are useless.

Road travel in Abyssinia is one of the most wearisome things in the world, for the cars cannot go faster than ten or fifteen miles an hour and the passengers are shaken like medicine bottles. Nor is it cheap. Every twenty or thirty miles zinc gates locked with heavy chains block one's way. Armed soldiers stand on either side waiting for passing

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motors, and they collect a toll of 1 taler before they open the gates and allow the cars to proceed.

There are also a number of road pirates who have erected toll-gates on their own account. They sometimes copy the official gates but often they simply heave blocks of stone or wood across the road. The tax that is collected at these posts is a side-line of the shums, the chiefs of the little villages. They are up to all kinds of dodges which always start off with toll dues. This is usually gladly paid by the travellers, for the charge is lower than at the official barriers and a few piastres will satisfy the guards. Then follow all manner of requests and a game permit is usually demanded, and, of course, this is not brought on a business journey. I had quite an exciting adventure over a demand for a game permit, when we went to the Blue Nile. We were suddenly brought to a standstill by a rock that had been dragged across the road. How this had been done we could not understand, for such large lumps of stone have not been moved by man power since the pyramids were built. We tried to shift it to one side, but that was beyond our powers. No one was in sight and we were on the verge of giving up our journey when the local shum appeared with the whole population of the village. He collected the toll and even gave us a receipt on the leaf of a calendar. Then he wanted to see our game permit. We had not bothered to get one as we had not brought guns with us, but this explanation did not satisfy the chief, and we had to get out of the car again while it was searched from top to bottom. It looked as if things were going to go badly for the shum when he suddenly found my telescope. He held it up triumphantly and said:

"You have not told the truth, monsieur, you have got a gun!"

"But Shum," I laughed, "that is only my telescope!"

"It is your gun, monsieur! You must pay for your game permit!"

He was not to be over-ridden and when I insisted that I

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could not shoot gazelles with my telescope, the mob looked threatening and I realised that words and abuse were of no use. I would have to pay up.

"How much is your permit, Shum?" I asked.

"The Emperor demands fifty talers but you get one from me for 5.

We began to haggle, but when they realised that we were willing to pay something, they became more polite and eventually I got a receipt on another calendar leaf for 2 talers, and this served as my game permit.

The Jimma Road is the foundation of the large road scheme, that has not yet been carried out. This road will in time go as far as Jimma, an important province for the export trade. There are large coffee plantations there and the foreign owners of these plantations consider a good connection with the capital a vital factor for trade. The Jimma Road Company was founded with Ato Kassa as its chief. The plan was to run lorries on this route and later an omnibus service. The Jimma Road ends at the Blue Nile, where there is a customs house. The office of the company is in a tiny house in the middle of a yard; the garages are made of zinc and the larger stone buildings will one day be storehouses; big business is expected, but nothing has come out of the plans yet. In the same yard bridge girders, which have been bought and paid for, are being allowed to rust although the storehouses are empty, and in the garages are housed some omnibuses that were ordered rather prematurely. A lorry leaves this place once a week and returns four days later with a full load. That is all that is necessary for the time being.

If the bridge across the Blue Nile had been erected instead of being allowed to rust and the pontoon ferries had been scrapped, and the road had been made as far as Jimma, there would now be far more traffic, for naturally the planters and others are not encouraged to trade by this inadequate transport route.

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The pontoon service over the Blue Nile is run by the wily Amhara, who have their own business methods. Once when we wanted to cross we stipulated our price beforehand, and were then told that there was only room for the mules on the first journey. We agreed to wait and the beasts arrived safely on the other side. The pontoons returned empty to fetch us. The business manager, who spoke a little French, then demanded payment of the sum that we had agreed on ; this we paid but the man asked for more. We thought of our mules that were anxiously awaiting us on the other side, and we gave in and paid our "excess fare". These are the kind of harmless dangers met with on a journey to the interior. The taler is really more useful than a rifle.

Modern scientific warfare always counts on transport facilities, but Abyssinia has none of any importance, so it is practically impossible to bring up reserves from the interior to the frontier—a serious consideration in time of war.

CHAPTER XIX

SUNDAY IN ADDIS ABABA

It was now mid-March, exactly six weeks since the Sunday of my arrival in Jibuti. That is long enough for one to be accepted as an inhabitant in Addis Ababa, and one of the great advantages of not being a visitor is that one is invited less frequently to Europeans' houses for "genuine Abyssinian suppers." At first I was asked to these meals every day, and for a week on end I ate vod with intshera, two items from the Abyssinian kitchen that are considered by Europeans to be the most tasty, and for that reason they are invariably served to new arrivals. I ate this food with enthusiasm on the first evening, but I felt positively unwell when the good hostess appeared on the seventh evening carrying in the dishes with an air of mystery, and asked:

"Guess what you are going to have for supper!"

I paled and answered:

"Vod with intshera." I knew that I was a spoil-sport but I could not help it.

Vod is a kind of highly seasoned stew, and intshera is Abyssinian bread very similar to Jewish Passover bread, except that the Abyssinians do not eat it dry. Of all the many Abyssinian customs the Europeans only learn how to eat this comparatively pleasant stuff. They have had enough practice in two or three weeks to do it quite well, and then they think they know the country excellently. You take a bit of this unleavened intshera and lay it on a plate, put a spoonful of vod over it, and then try to scoop it into the mouth without soiling the

fingers or clothes, using little bits of the bread as a fork. My hostess was astonished that I could eat so well in the Abyssinian way, on this my seventh evening. I naturally did not tell her that I had had practice and hoped modestly to create the impression that I had a natural faculty for eating vod with intshera.

Later on when I came to know the natives, I was asked to eat with them, but they gave me roast beef and Wiener-Schnitzel instead of this national dish. They themselves ate all kinds of vegetables because it was Lent. The Lent fast lasts three months in Abyssinia, and the natives though they are great meat-eaters, do not eat any at all during this period. Lent was noticeable in the menu of the Hotel Imperial, but in a revised form. We got meat every day as the Europeans had to eat up the usual meat supply of the whole town. I did not get much pleasure from the hotel food. A Greek was in charge of the kitchens and his vision ended at roast lamb.

I only once ate really well in Addis Ababa and that was at the Emperor's table in the summer palace in Genneth, where he gave a small luncheon-party. Our places were marked with cards and a servant dressed in white with knee-breeches stood behind each chair. Menus printed in gold lay beside each place and they showed that there were seven courses; but a European guest could not learn more, for they were printed in Amharic. My surmise that one of these courses would be vod and intshera was wrong. We were given an exquisite French meal with lovely wines from His Majesty's cellars. The red wine was warmed just above the room temperature and the white wine delightfully cool. We drank champagne with the roast meat, and then coffee and very old brandy. The meal was served like clockwork.

On my fifth Sunday in Africa I was again the Emperor's guest. He took me to church. He went every Sunday, tactfully choosing a different place of worship each week. This Sunday we visited one of the oldest in Abyssinia, the monastery church on the Intotto Mountain, near Addis Ababa.

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It is famous for its vaults and frescoes. His Excellency Belatin Getta Herouy studied the Amharic alphabet in the church school that adjoins the monastery, sixty years ago. The Emperor who had banned my visit to the disloyal monastery town of Dabra Libanos, now wanted to show this loyal monastery.

The worst of Abyssinian church-going is that it begins too early in the morning. I had to rise shortly after four o'clock, after returning at midnight from my journey along the Jimma Road with the munitions caravan. The service did not begin till six, but the journey lasted an hour so it was not quite light when we left. The Imperial procession looked very impressive as it moved along in the light of dawn. The Emperor was escorted by two armoured cars conveying a guard of thirty soldiers; machine-guns were mounted on both vehicles, but for show more than anything else. A great many courtiers accompanied the Emperor in cars, going along in a long column, with the Imperial Rolls-Royce leading. The last car was an extraordinary Cadillac, which was the Emperor's first motor. When he bought this car Haile Selassie was not yet a Europeanised monarch but only a progressive African ruler. The coachwork of the Cadillac was painted a creamy white, encircled with a triple stripe of the Abyssinian colours. When the car travelled quickly it looked just like the national flag. Times had changed from the days of the Cadillac to the Rolls-Royce of to-day. We were given seats in one of the Emperor's private cars.

Although there is no Court Circular in Addis Ababa to inform the people of the Emperor's movements, the streets were crowded as we drove past. News travels from mouth to mouth, and the first comers had taken up their positions on the previous Saturday night to ensure a good view, just as Londoners do. But they sometimes have an ulterior motive. The man who takes his place the night before is no ordinary spectator but probably a beggar or supplicant who has something on his mind, and he shouts out at the top of his voice as

the Emperor passes: "Habet! Habet!" and proceeds to explain his case in a long sing-song. The Dshanhoi may be some miles farther on, but the story goes on without stopping. All these men are firmly convinced that their Dshanhoi will fulfil their wishes, and they return to their homes with light hearts.

Along the route the ranks of beggars become thinner until they cease altogether. Quite far from the town we met one solitary spectator who had only arrived in Addis Ababa the previous day. When he was in the town this perfect black gentleman wore a splendid dark-blue suit that had been made in Savile Row. On his head he wore the first bowler hat that had ever been seen in Addis Ababa, much to the astonishment of the citizens, and in his eye the first monocle that had adorned a face in the town.

Herbert Julian was the name on this stranger's passport, but he was known to the world as the "Black Eagle of Harlem." He was the famous flyer who announced his intention after the Italo-Abyssinian frontier incident, of leaving at once for Abyssinia with his own flying corps and starting a boycott against Italian ice-cream merchants in Harlem. He had been to Abyssinia some years previously to perform a miracle before the Emperor and his people. He went up in the Emperor's Farman 'plane and jumped down with a parachute. This created a tremendous sensation among the Abyssinians, but this success went to the elated negro's head and he next wanted to perform some more tricks in the Fahrman. He piloted the aeroplane himself up to a hundred feet, and crashed disgracefully to the ground, damaging the machine and breaking two ribs in his black body. The enthusiasm faded in a moment and the Emperor was seriously angry, for the Fahrman was his first aeroplane, just as this had been the "Black Eagle's" first flight under his own pilotage. But it was too late for redress, for Julian had been made a colonel in the army after his triumphal parachute jump and his appointment could not be withdrawn. However, he left the country.

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Since this accident Julian had learned to fly and he has accomplished several record flights. He still calls himself Colonel Julian, but times have changed in Abyssinia and to-day the people are ashamed of this colonel, calling him Shankala Nrs—Nigger Eagle—which is not a distinguished nickname. They never thought he would dare to return to Abyssinia, and now he had suddenly appeared. He stood at the side of the road and if he did not shout "Habet! Habet!" he had the same thought in his head as the other supplicants. But the Emperor pretended not to see him. He was not pleased when someone reminded him of his past.

Soon after passing the "Black Eagle" the Emperor's car pulled up and with it all the other cars. His Majesty stepped out of his Rolls-Royce and the whole entourage got out of the other cars. A tall Abyssinian carrying two guns disembarked from a green limousine and went up to the Emperor. He gave him one of the guns and aimed with the other at a herd of gazelles that was running past at that moment. He fired, but his shot went wide. Then the Emperor fired. One of the herd dropped behind, staggered for a few seconds and fell on the sand. The whole episode was a ceremony. The tall Abyssinian was the Emperor's huntsman, Kenjazmatsch Bakala, a first-class shot who would certainly have killed a gazelle if court etiquette had allowed it, but the people, the soldiers, and we white men had to be shown that Kenjazmatsch Bakala was only a dilettante compared with the Emperor. So the crack shot had to miss and that was no small consideration for him. I liked this Kenjazmatsch Bakala; he seemed to me to be a tragic figure, for he had talent which he could only use negatively to emphasise the Emperor's skill. Kenjazmatsch Bakala, who had always to shoot without hitting, is a typical actor in the Abyssinian cavalcade.

For the second part of our journey I travelled with Kenjazmatsch Bakala, and although he did not speak a word of any European language, nor I a syllable of Amharic, we made

friends quickly. He was the Emperor's personal guard as well as his huntsman, and followed his master everywhere with a loaded rifle, which he was allowed to fire if anyone looked like attacking the Emperor. He was a conservative fellow. He had served the Emperor for twenty years but he had remained the same Kenjazmatsch Bakala, wearing the simple Abyssinian dress with a shama, and even an Imperial edict could not have squeezed his feet into shoes. He is the last bare-foot courtier in close touch with the Emperor. As we drove along, he suddenly stopped the car, disappeared with his gun for a few minutes and returned with a lynx which he handed over to me. On the next day he presented me with a beautiful old Abyssinian head-dress and some antlers, and from that day his servants brought me a daily supply of six or eight partridges. I passed those on to the hotel cook and at last had a change from roast lamb.

When we reached Intotto the service had begun, but as only the preliminary prayers were being said we were allowed in. The church was dim, for the stained-glass windows did not let in much light. The half-light enhanced the beauty of the place. A priest stood in front of a lectern with a huge old prayer-book, and read the psalms which the congregation chanted with him. Burning eucalyptus leaves and the incense that the priests carried round the church in large vessels, filled the air with a heavy smell.

The abuna, still dressed in the simplest garb, sat in prayer on the steps of the holy of holies, and through the open door I saw priests prostrating themselves before God, who they think is present in person at their services.

The service lasted for five hours and the Emperor sat through it all, almost without moving. But as we were not controlled by the priests, we left the church after two hours to inspect the much more interesting monastery school and the crypt. The frescoes, that were painted by unknown masters of a bygone age, were marvellous, but the distant view over the new capital was even more beautiful. The

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white houses contrasted sharply with the dull green of the eucalyptus trees and the old palace of Gibbi rose up like a crown above the town. From here Addis Ababa was as lovely as well as an interesting town.

It was lunch-time when we left Intotto, but instead of returning to the town, the procession drove to a Greek's house where a shooting competition had been arranged. The competitors, who were all Europeans, had assembled when the Emperor and his following arrived. Haile Selassie paid 50 talers entrance fee like everyone else, and sat down until his turn came round. These competitions take place often and the Emperor never misses them. The winner was to receive all the entrance money. Thirty competitors were trying their skill this Sunday, so 1,500 talers had been collected. Everyone tried his hardest for they were not shooting for stuffed dolls, but the Emperor was the winner, and he deserved to be, for he was far and away the best shot.

Haile Selassie had arranged my afternoon programme. I was going to see the Boy Scouts of Abyssinia. A barracks for 300 boys has been arranged far out of the town at the castle of the exiled Ras Hailu. In one way the Abyssinian Boy Scout movement is different from any others; the members are not voluntary and the organisation is not half serious, half sporting, but it forms the youngest section of the Abyssinian Army. They live together, training on the broad parade grounds and learning tactics in the surrounding countryside.

When I saw it the movement was only ten months old, and it was under the charge of an Abyssinian schoolmaster and an Abyssinian-born Greek. The Emperor had founded the organisation himself and followed its development enthusiastically. He had the same object in view as Baden-Powell when he started his movement: he wanted a dependable messenger service, modernly organised, whose members could find their way about the country by instinct rather than with their eyes. The Emperor had also another reason for creating scouts. By

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unwritten law the Abyssinian officers were not made by natural ability but by birth, and it was enough qualification to be a chief's son or to come of good family, to be promoted automatically to the rank of general in the Abyssinian Army. The Emperor knew that only a few of these officers really understood the art of soldiering and that the country lacked leaders.

With the Boy Scout movement the Emperor removed this privilege of the old aristocracy and broke away in actuality from a feudal to a modern and democratic state. He himself chose from the schools the boys that he was going to turn into officers and political leaders. They were sent to the large barracks to learn in its classrooms languages, history and geography, and in the open they were trained to be reliable soldiers.

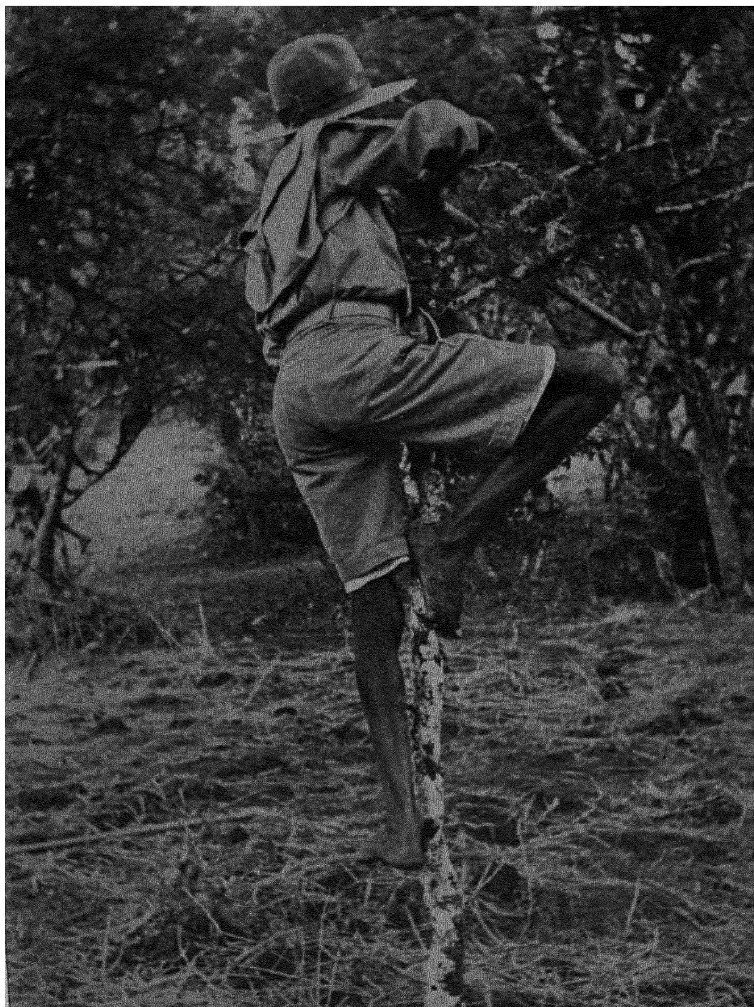
When my car drove into the courtyard of the Boy Scouts' barracks, we were received by a guard of honour, and the band played a stirring march. I was welcomed by the two leaders as I stepped out of the car and had to pass down the front rank of the guard of honour. The boys stood erect, the tallest in front and the smallest five-year-olds in the rear. They all wore scout uniform and saluted in the approved style. I was touched by this welcome and it seemed vitally important to do the right thing as I inspected the front rank, as I had seen princes do in news films. And I did not find it so easy. A little practice and routine are necessary for walking up and down a rank of soldiers, looking into their eyes, and keeping up the right pace. I hope that my inspection succeeded.

When it was over the Greek commandant asked what I would like to see.

"The Emperor held a rehearsal yesterday, for he considered it important that everything should go off well to-day. We have arranged a full programme for you, to give you an impression of the work that goes on here, and we are going to begin with a visit to the classrooms."



BOY SCOUT BUGLER



BOY SCOUT CLIMBING A SAPLING

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In the school I had to ask different questions that were all promptly answered, and after a short time I wanted to be out and see the boys performing in the open. My wish was met and we went out to a wood nearby to see a war game. We were impatiently waiting at the edge of the wood for the battle to begin; I noticed another smaller wood nearby and suddenly a whistle came from that direction and it went slowly up and down as each tree moved forward inch by inch. The motion was scarcely noticeable but the wood was coming nearer every minute; when it was right in front of us we still had not seen a sign of the boys who were hidden in the branches.

"That is the living wood," the Greek told me. "My boys carry out this exercise very cleverly. Camouflage comes instinctively to Abyssinians, and the countryside, of which they know every stick and stone, helps them in this art."

On the second blast of the whistle the trees were thrown aside and the scouts stormed our wood. The trees were quite young and not more than two or three inches thick, but the boys climbed them like monkeys, and almost before we knew that they had begun to climb, a small figure was at the top of each tree. They knew how to distribute their weight without bending the trunks one way or the other, and every tree stood as straight as a candle under a weight of not less than five stone.

When this performance was over, more relays of boys came into view on a small hill opposite our wood, accompanied by an officer on horseback. Their duty was to take our position. Their green, red and gold flag waved in the wind, and when the bugles sounded the attack they dropped down the steep hill on top of us. The scouts who had come out of the "living wood" were our defenders, and they did not wait until the foe were on us, but rushed out to meet them, and a hand-to-hand battle ensued. They fought in all seriousness, and when it was over a few genuine wounded lay on the field, and the stretcher-bearers were able to do their share.

I enjoyed it all just as much as the boys themselves, and we became good friends that afternoon. After the strenuous manœuvres they were allowed to rest and formed into line, squatting on their poles until the next command. After they were in marching order again, we stood on a mound and the band played as we took the march past. Then they were dismissed, and we were invited into supper.

Long tables were laid in the big dining-hall, and a place had been reserved for me among the boys. I did not feel embarrassed among them, for they kept up a constant conversation in English and French, asking me innumerable questions, and when vod with intshera was served they took pains to teach me how to eat it.

The vod tasted better here than at my European hosts', but perhaps I only liked it more because I was hungry after being out in the fresh air, and excited by what I had seen, and perhaps too the dish was better suited to my surroundings. I might pass as an authority on vod-eating among Europeans, but these boys were amazed at my clumsiness, and they simply could not understand how one did not know how to eat it.

Vod is the only kind of meat that the Abyssinians eat cooked. The others are eaten raw. The native butchers slaughter the oxen, goats and zebus in the street and sell the meat on the spot. The flesh is cut up into long strips and when it is eaten at table you hold one end in your mouth, holding the other end tight with the left hand, and cut off thin shavings, which are peppered and popped raw into the mouth. The cutting requires great skill, for the knives are uncomfortably sharp, and as the meat is sliced like lightning from the bottom up it always looks as if the eater's nose was going to be slit.

It is not much pleasure for a European to be invited to a meal with orthodox Abyssinians, and he can consider himself lucky if he is given vod with intshera, for usually he will be offered raw meat, and it would cause offence not to eat it in the customary way. Tables and chairs are unknown in real Abyssinian houses. At meals they squat round a dish of meat,

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and the father is the first to take out a piece, from which he cuts off a slice and puts it into the guest's mouth. That is a sign of great friendship and affection, and even if it is unpleasant for a European, he must go through with it. After that the meal begins and the food is washed down with tetch and talla. When the meal is finished one stays on a little while just to give audible proof of one's satisfaction.

This predilection for raw meat is the cause of one terrible custom. Many parents tear out their children's uvulas in the belief that they can swallow larger pieces. Sometimes the wound heals, but more often the children die of blood-poisoning.

The Emperor has tried to put an end to the practice of eating raw meat, but his efforts have not succeeded, and raw meat seems to be more popular than he himself. He cannot change their ways, but in the barracks where he has direct influence over the scouts, he has broken them of the habit; their menu is chosen by the Emperor and raw flesh is unknown. I noticed something else at this meal with the children. The country was still fasting, but meat was served here, where the Emperor comes into his own and openly revolts against the laws of the church, and this dish made one think that it was not simply for the sake of his conscience that the Emperor spent five hours at the morning service.

CHAPTER XX

ITALY IN ABYSSINIA

I WENT early to the station on the morning that the thirty Italians left. I had often seen the crowds on the platform when the Jibuti train left, but they seemed bigger than ever that day. The station was crammed as thickly as Paddington on a fine Friday. The Italian Legation guard were lined up on the platform and many of the staff were there, and all the Italian colony who were staying behind had come to see the "lucky ones" off. Most of the thirty were families who were travelling at their Government's expense. They had got an order to make a list of all their goods and chattels and give it to the legation, who gave them tickets and some money for the journey, and now they had collected on the platform to wish Addis Ababa farewell.

The Italians were not going home, but to Eritrea, where they were needed, and I was given to understand that this was not an evacuation. I knew that the Italian boats to Massawa were always full, and that officials and workmen were on board as well as soldiers. The Italian Government had now summoned all the Italians living in Abyssinia to Asmara in Eritrea, and Mogadishu and Jubbaland.

Before the train left, His Excellency Count Vinci, whom I had met at the American cocktail-party, came on to the platform. He gave a short address to his countrymen, in the Fascist style, using bitter words, without consideration for the country whose guest he was. The whole station was electrified with the atmosphere of Fascism. A few Italians were

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wearing the various Fascisti uniforms and carried flags. Italian was being spoken on all sides and the salute was being given. When the train slid out they sang the "Giovinezza" at the top of their voices.

Till that day I had been very seldom in touch with the Italian Legation and the Italian colony, for I knew that if I wanted to work successfully in Addis Ababa I had to take the Abyssinian point of view, and the people would have been very displeased if I had had any close connections with Italy. The whole town was full of spies who reported everyone who visited the Italian Ministry, and I would never have got any information out of the Abyssinians if they knew that I was also being informed by the Italians. I was between two fires, and I had decided in favour of the Abyssinians, but now my time was nearly up and I would leave with the next train to Jibuti, so I decided when I was left on the platform with the Italians that I would approach them.

I went up to Count Vinci and asked if I might call.

"The legation is at your disposal at any time," he replied, "but God alone knows whether I can receive you. Come to-day and we will see if we cannot find time to see you."

Count Luigi Vinci had the most difficult post in the Italian Diplomatic Service, especially if one remembers that he had only come to Addis Ababa a year previously and had never had time to study the country properly. When he presented his credentials to the Emperor with the customary ceremoniousness, his country was still friendly and, indeed, no one thought at that time that there would be disputes within a few months. Then he became the chief representative of the enemy, but he was a respected enemy, till he instilled a sharper note. It was alleged in the capital that the Italian Minister had said in public: "It is beneath our dignity to treat with a nigger state." It was not possible to prove whether the minister had said this or not, but that did not matter to the Abyssinians, and ever since the minister's position had been worse, and the guard of Eritrean Somalis had all they could do to keep the

Abyssinians away from the legation. These natives came with sullen faces and threatened the minister's life.

It was a long drive out of the town to the Italian Legation, which lay in the middle of a beautiful park. It was surrounded by high walls that had been originally erected as a protection against hyænas, but were now useful for keeping out excitable Abyssinians. The minister's house is in the new Italian style, and there are so many small buildings that the whole legation looks like a small town. The staff was very big; in addition to the minister there were a counsellor, three under-secretaries, a military attaché and a gigantic consular department with countless clerks and administrators; all of them knew that their rank was only honorary and that they had other duties to perform.

Before I left for the legation I had noticed great excitement in the town, and I learned the reason from the Italians. Sir Sidney Barton's daughter, who had married the Italian Consul at Debra Markos a few years ago, had arrived at Addis Ababa by special aeroplane.

Debra Markos lies north-west of Addis Ababa, not far from the Blue Nile. It is inhabited exclusively by natives, most of whom are Gallis and can only be reached by caravan. The consulate is the only stone building, and the Consul and his wife and child are the only white inhabitants for miles around. The natives had looked threatening, and although there had been no actual conflict, it was anything but pleasant for a woman and child. The English Minister and his wife were very worried about their daughter and had frequently tried to bring her and her child back to Addis Ababa. A caravan, for anyone connected with the Italian Legation, would have been suicidal, so an aeroplane was the only way out. Lady Barton visited her friend, the Empress, and asked her, as mother to mother, for help. The next day the Emperor put his Fokker machine at their disposal, and the Italian Consul's wife and child arrived a few hours later in Addis Ababa. But Baron Muzzi, the Consul, remained at his post.

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The Italian Consulates are spread far into the interior of the country, where there are no Italian interests to be protected. Usually the Consuls are the only Italians in their districts. They have not to perform the usual consular duties. Their business is to know everything that happens in the country, and through their reports Italy knows the districts almost as well as the natives themselves. Italy has a number of agents in Abyssinia, but the lion's share of their work falls on the Consuls' shoulders, while the agents try to win over the people to the side of Italy. They have large funds of money for doing this, for the taler is the best argument in this country. This used not to be an expensive game, and villages and districts could be bought into sabotaging the Emperor's administration, but now the price of treason has gone up. There is a boom in the trade, and every advantage is taken of it.

I admired the courage and selflessness of the Italian Consuls. They do not take orders from the consular service, but from the General Staff or the Intelligence Service, and they are really condemned to death, for if there is a war they will inevitably be the first to fall before the fury of the natives. The Italian Government does not expect to be able to save these men, for a rescue-party could not reach them in less than two or four weeks, and in time of war they could not count on the Emperor's protection.

The consulates are fitted with wireless telegraphy, and can keep in constant communication with the Italian Legation in Addis Ababa. In this way Italy is kept more exactly and more reliably informed about every incident in the country than the Abyssinian Government. The legation has extended its net of wireless stations and only lately started a school of wireless telegraphy in Addis Ababa for the Consuls' wireless operators, who are given a short course before going to their posts.

The Italian Legation at Addis Ababa bristles with activity, and whoever visits it inevitably comes away with the

impression that Mussolini can be well pleased with this outpost. Among the diplomats and consular workers I met two mysterious Italians who only seldom left the legation precincts. They were only guests at the legation and were staying in the town for "private purposes." One was called Martini and the other Benedetti, and whenever I wrote my name in any visitors' book I saw their names. They were a couple of war-adventurers, who saw all the Abyssinian institutions and their preparations for war, and were sometimes discovered by the criminal police in places where Europeans were not admitted. Just before I left I discovered that both gentlemen belonged to the Italian Intelligence Service and that they were directing Italian espionage in Abyssinia.

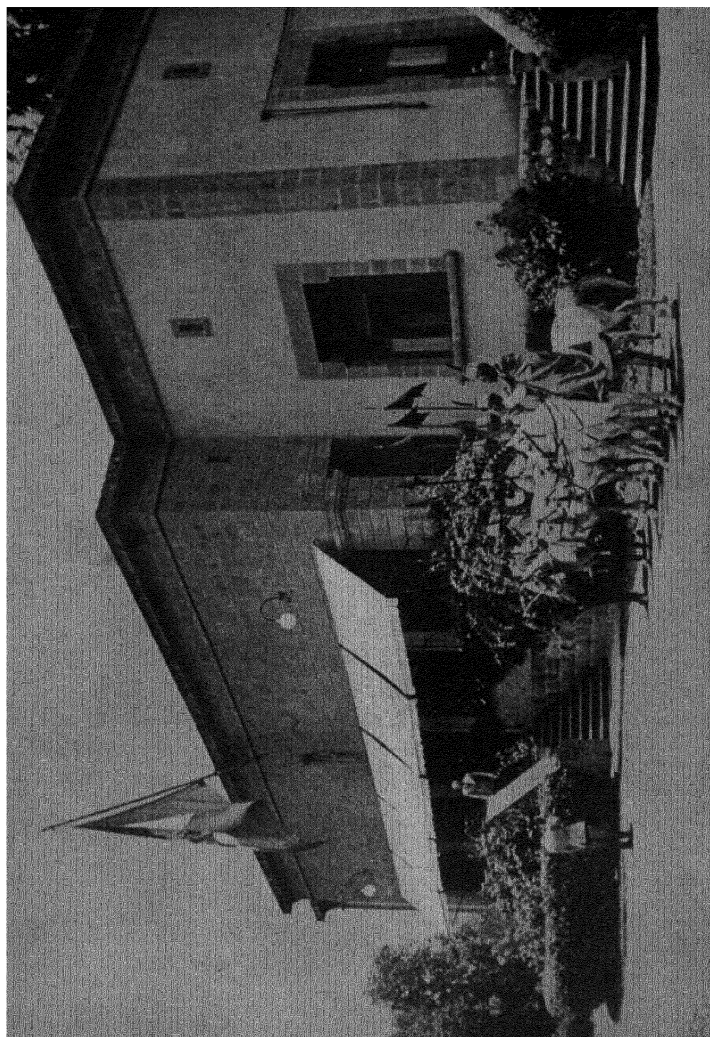
Abyssinia offered these expert agents no serious difficulties, for every child knew when troop trains left and ammunitions arrived, where the frontiers were fortified, and, in fact, everything that keeps foreign agents busy in other countries.

As their official task was light, they had another commission. They had to organise new Italian institutions and make these open to as many natives as possible. There has always been a "Caso Italiano" in Addis Ababa, where the Italian children are educated in the spirit of Fascism, and where the new Italy's festivals are celebrated. The Caso Italiano had now become the headquarters of feverish activity, and new organisations were continually springing up, which were no longer only for the Fascists of Addis Ababa, but for the whole of Abyssinia. These organisations are supposed to be an example of how Italy would develop the country if she had the chance.

A fine Italian hospital has been erected at great cost in Gullali. It is the most beautiful building in the land. It is built in the new Italian style, with marble and other expensive stone which was brought from Italy, and it is one of the sights of Abyssinia. It was opened only recently with great solemnity, and called the "Haile Selassie Hospital." No one



H.E. COUNT LUIGI VINCI



THE NEW ITALIAN HOSPITAL IN ADDIS ABABA

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knows what the Italians are aiming at with this name, least of all the Abyssinians, who never darken its doors.

"That is only an advertisement," an Abyssinian Minister told me, "and they cannot impress us like that. The whole hospital is only a façade and there is nothing behind it."

Another no less impressive Italian institution caused more commotion than the hospital, and later led to a severe dispute. Italy has long been preparing for war, and a few years ago she obtained a concession for wireless telegraphy. She paid for it and built in Abyssinia the highest-powered and most modern wireless station of all Africa. She had still no open interest in the country, and the Abyssinians did not realise the significance of the station until it was completed. Then they realised that their only communication with the outside world was in the hands of the Italians who were in charge of the station, and the Emperor declared the concession null and void on political grounds, and commanded the Italians to hand over the station to Abyssinia. The Italians would not hear of that and there was open dispute, which ended in the Emperor erecting a second station with all speed, using French apparatus. The dispute went on and finally the Abyssinians triumphed; the Italians gave in, and Abyssinia now possesses a wireless station of the highest efficiency.

There are numerous Italian schools and missions, and recently a kindergarten has been started to win the hearts of the Abyssinians, indirectly, through their children. The native infants are treated here like Italians; they are given pretty, clean clothes, and all kinds of toys are at their disposal in the big playgrounds. After being there for a few weeks they salute in the Roman style and call out in childish voices: "Evviva Mussolini!" What does Italy want in Abyssinia?

The world only heard of the Italo-Abyssinian differences after 5th December, 1934, when some Italian soldiers were killed in the skirmish at Wal-Wal, but these differences have existed for decades and were only deferred at Aduwa. In 1906 and 1928 the Italians made further treaties with the

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Abyssinians which guaranteed the original frontiers, so Mussolini's sharp action after Wal-Wal came as a surprise to the country.

It was extremely difficult to find out the facts of the first fight at Wal-Wal, for the Abyssinian and Italian eyewitnesses with whom I had talked were, of course, biased. At last I was told the story by the representative of a neutral great power.

At the beginning of December, 1934, the Anglo-Abyssinian Frontier Commission, who had been laying down the boundary between Abyssinia and British Somaliland, were on their way to the capital after two years' successful work. A short time before, the last stone had been laid on the frontier that adjoined British and Italian Somaliland and Abyssinia. Abyssinia and Italy were still on very good terms, and Captain Cimurratti, who was to command the Italians at Wal-Wal, came to the laying of the last stone.

The caravan of the commission was coming back by Gerlogubi and Harar to Diredawa, where they would take train to Addis Ababa for the signing of the treaty. They could only go slowly through the desert of Ogaden and had to make many halts. They stopped at Wal-Wal, because they knew that there was water there. This well is famous, as it is the only water supply within a radius of many miles, and for this reason it was specially mentioned in the Italo-Abyssinian treaty of 1928, and a clause was included allowing the natives of Italian Somaliland to draw water from it.

When the commission came to the well they found that it was not only being used by the Somalis from across the frontier, but also by a force of Italian colonial soldiers who were installed in a camp fitted with wireless.

The leader of the Abyssinian members of the commission, Fitorari Tessema, was the first person in authority who had visited the district for some years. He ordered the Italian soldiers to leave Abyssinian soil immediately, but the commanding officer refused to comply with the request and

summoned Captain (now Major) Cimurratti by wireless. He appeared with a large force of Askaris—Italian native soldiers—from the main camp, which was stationed only thirty miles away. Cimurratti refused to arbitrate and asserted that the Italian force was acting as a guard for the well, which had been made accessible to the Italian colony through the treaty of 1928. The Italian soldiers were only there to protect the Italian Somalis.

The Abyssinian commission did not accept this explanation, for they saw plainly that Cimurratti could not have come up so quickly with his strong force if there had not been a large Italian encampment within the borders, for Wal-Wal lies well inside Abyssinia, 100 miles from the Italian Somali land frontier.

It is impossible to say which side fired the first shot. It seems that Abyssinia did, for their ire was roused by this flagrant breach of their country's sovereign rights. Of course, they knew nothing about such technicalities as "flagrant breach" and "sovereign rights." They only saw that Italian soldiers had "broken into" their country, and they considered it their duty to liberate it.

The first shot was fired. The Italians replied and sent for reserves immediately. The Abyssinians sent to Gerlogubi and 800 warriors were rushed to Wal-Wal, and the struggle developed into a real battle. The Italian reinforcements came up quickly, bringing light tanks with them, and aeroplanes dropped bombs on the Abyssinians. But neither tanks nor bombs served any purpose. The Abyssinians hardly used their rifles, but drew their sabres and charged the Italians, and they succeeded in putting a tank out of action in a way that would have been quite impossible under European conditions of war. They stuck their spears and sabres in the caterpillar wheels of the tanks and jammed the machinery. The bombs did not do much damage, because they missed their mark; the Abyssinians concealed themselves in the bush and the Italians had to throw their bombs into

the blue, and later, when the enemies fought a hand-to-hand battle, the aeroplanes had to give up for fear of hitting their own men.

The Italians retreated, but returned later when the Abyssinians retired from Wal-Wal, and the district is still occupied by Italy. It looked as if war was going to break out there and then, for the Abyssinians were assembling at Gerlogubi to attack the Italians once more. The Italian camp was demoralised, because the Askaris had turned against their white officers and an Italian sergeant was killed by his Somalis.

"We want to be independent subjects," these black soldiers said, "and we do not want to be under Italian or Abyssinian rule."

Captain Cimurratti reinstated order, but the situation looked bad for the Italians in December, and they could not have arrested an Abyssinian invasion. For the Abyssinians were intending to attack again to free their country and even to press on to Italian Somaliland. When the Emperor heard the news he forbade this plan and pacified his warriors.

The Wal-Wal affair was fought out in the presence of the English Frontier Commission. Colonel Clifford, its leader, hoisted the British flag on his tent, and they watched the battle as neutrals.

The Italian Press reported 135 killed in the battle, but actually there were over 2,300, and when there was more fighting a few weeks later, there were still more casualties. Then Mussolini stepped in. He demanded financial compensation for the casualties and that the Abyssinians should salute the Italian flag at the outpost of Wal-Wal. At the same time he mobilised the 1911-1912 class of black shirts and embarked his first reinforcements for Massawa and Mogadishu. The Emperor also made his plans; he ordered his men to Ogaden, and before the first Italian troopship reached the Suez Canal more than 100,000 warriors were on the way there. The Emperor officially denied that he had mobilised, but I saw the columns of soldiers with my own

eyes. Abyssinia refused both of Signor Mussolini's claims categorically, and Haile Selassie turned to the League of Nations, although Mussolini maintained that it was a simple controversy that could only be fought out between Italy and Abyssinia.

It is not quite clear what Italy is aiming at in North-East Africa. Some experts say that she is trying to unite her two colonies, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, with this expedition, but I do not think that this can be so, firstly, because the country in between is worthless desert land and, secondly, because this plan would come up against French interests, and France would never give up her strip of country there.

A much more likely purpose was outlined to me by a European member of the Frontier Commission, and I was able to corroborate it myself at Ogaden. This man suggested that the *casus belli* was a river—the Webi Shebeli, which might one day become the Nile of North-East Africa. Two-thirds of its course is in Abyssinia and the remainder runs through Italian territory, and except for certain sections of the River Jubba, it is the only river that flows all the year round. Whoever got possession of this desert country could fertilise it by irrigation, but it would be important to build the first dams in Abyssinian territory. Italian Somaliland has a climate suited to Italians, for the air is good and there are no disease-carrying insects, and it could be settled with four or five million people if the river were dammed. Another attraction is that the mountains of these southern districts are said to be rich in minerals, and gold is supposed to be in the river-beds, and between Diredawa and Gerlogubi there is believed to be oil. But this undiscovered wealth is a subsidiary interest to the River Webi Shebeli. So just as many builders and engineers are being brought from Italy as soldiers, and they bring with them detailed plans for a huge irrigation scheme that has been worked out in the Italian Colonial Office.

If it had not come to fighting at Wal-Wal, Italy might have waited a few years for her plans to materialise, but now

her project has become an actuality and retreat seems impossible.

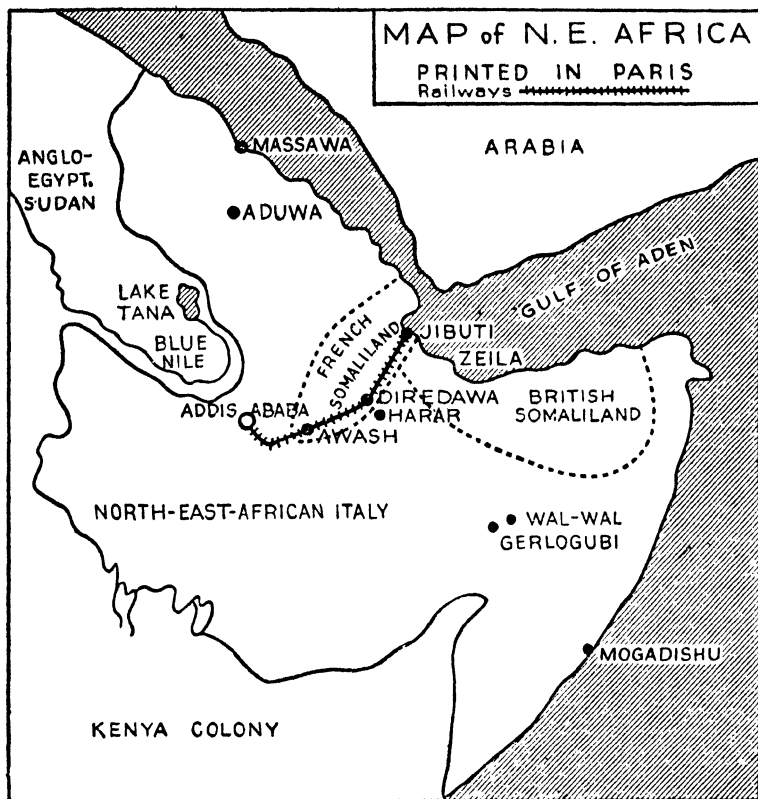
Troops are only being concentrated in Eritrea to make a second attacking front, so as to weaken the Abyssinian forces by splitting them up. Signor Mussolini has no definite plans in this region, for he knows that Great Britain has interests there; Lake Tana lies in the north and that is the source of the Blue Nile, one of the main Nile sources, which are of immense political importance for the British in the Sudan and Egypt. Another source of the Nile is the White Nile, but it flows at the rate of only 14,000 cubic feet of water per second to the Blue Nile's 500,000. I was told in Addis Ababa, where they are so generous with concessions, that England offered the Emperor £1,000,000 for Lake Tana, but he refused. I do not know how much of this story is true, but certainly England is not considering the possibility of sending an expeditionary force to further her interests, as was rumoured.

The only other object that Mussolini has in view in Eritrea is a second battle of Aduwa that must end in an Italian victory this time. The dictator must achieve such heroic deeds, and he would consider this victory to be his greatest triumph, for he would be wiping out a blot in Italy's history.

Two different maps are current in Abyssinia. One was made in 1932 and was published by the Italian Colonial Ministry; the other shows Abyssinia as it will look in 1936. No one knows who issued this second map, which was printed in Paris.

The Italian map of 1932 shows the boundaries that were approved in the treaty made after Aduwa, and in accordance with the agreements of 1906 and 1928, and it is the strongest argument in the hands of the Abyssinians; on it the Italian Colonial Office itself recognises, and establishes, the fact that the Italian troops are no longer on Italian, but Abyssinian soil. Wal-Wal is not marked, but Gerlogubi, which lies about thirty-five miles farther in than Wal-Wal, is included, and

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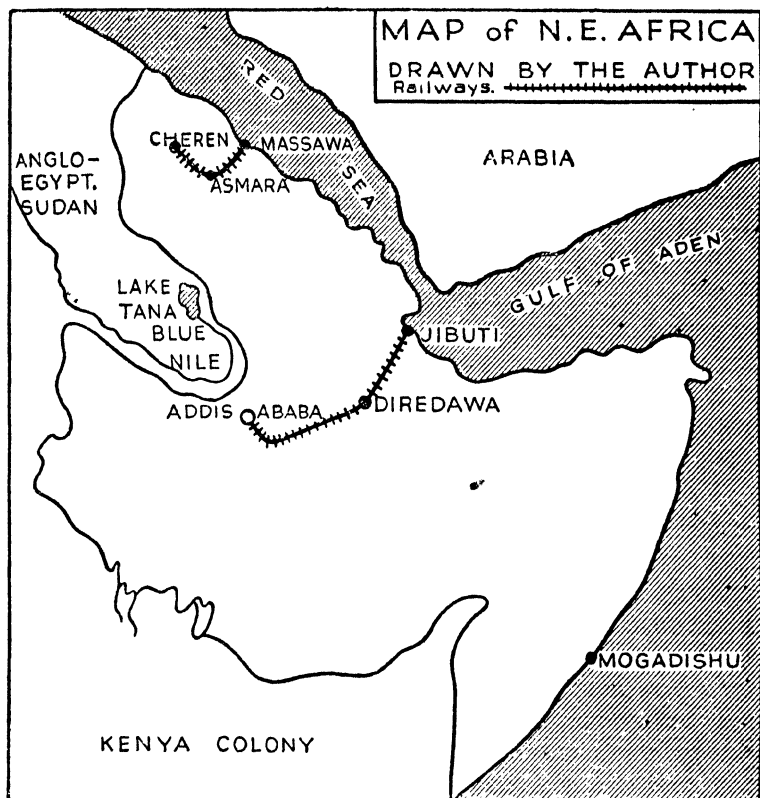
the frontier runs round about 135 miles from the second town, leaving no room for doubt that the incidents occurred well within Abyssinian territory, where the Italians had encamped contrary to the treaties. The second map does not appear to have been drawn by an Italian hand, for it shows too much consideration for the other powers, and does not make allowance for the unification of Italy's two north-eastern colonies. In Italian circles it is said that, granted victory, Mussolini is counting on being given French Somaliland by France, perhaps in exchange for a North African colony. This second map shows the French colony extended to the Awash range, and transfers the boundary line south of the Blue Nile; comparatively small areas are allowed to Italy. Nobody takes this map seriously except the Abyssinians, who see signs of the menace of the "white danger" in such irresponsible plans. (See page 203).

I found it interesting to draw a third map, showing Mussolini's presumable aims. This points to a hunger for empire which would only be satisfied at the edge of the Lake Tana district, so as not to tread on Great Britain's toes. But to compensate for this, Mussolini hopes for British Somaliland, and dreams of a vast colony of 603,000 square miles, or five times as big as the mother country. (See page 205). The forceful war preparations of the Italians naturally created a war consciousness in Abyssinia, with the result that Italy's demands for compensation were not entertained. Reports on the succeeding incidents were always served up to the rest of the world by the Italians. The skirmishes that followed Wal-Wal had a curious history and only very seldom had honest political grounds.

A few months ago the Italian Foreign Office Press Department, which is in the charge of Mussolini's son-in-law, Count Ciano, reported a "bloody attack" on the consulate at Gondar. A big news item was made out of this, and the result was that the 1913 class was mobilised and sent to North-East Africa.

The Gondar trouble was not very serious. The Italian

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Consul there had a pretty black servant who was wooed by two natives. She was a wily girl, and was able, for some time, to have two strings to her bow. She promised to marry both, and saw them, without letting either know that the other also found her favour. This double game could not be kept secret for ever, and one day one lover heard of his rival and discovered that he was at that moment with the girl. He roused his friends, who were naturally ready at any time for a Tshiki-tshik, and they marched to the consulate to haul out the girl and her friend. This is the not unusual love story that was made into an attack in the Italian papers.

The Frobenius expedition happened to witness this "incident" and were not a little astonished when they heard the exaggerated reports some weeks later in Addis Ababa. The little black girl was certainly having her fill of flirtation, but that was hardly reason enough for mobilising a whole class of young men which was reported by the Italians to number 560,000.

The outcome of this war is quite as thickly enshrouded in mystery as the causes. Apart from the technical difficulties of a war in this country, which is suited for anything rather than fighting, a great deal depends on the soldiers themselves. Italy comes with a well-disciplined young army that has been brought up in Fascist environment. The commanding officers are experienced in colonial warfare, but the black shirts are not accustomed to Abyssinian conditions. They require regular meals and good beds at home. On account of the rarified air in this country they will require more careful attention, and even then their efficiency will be considerably lower. On top of this they will have to fight against an enemy whose strategy is strange to them, and who will be able to take them by surprise. Too much is expected of these young men.

Italy has already waged one war in Africa that lasted eighteen years, and this war that must be fought out in the

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bush and mountains of Ethiopia, may last just as long, in spite of modern technique. Every inch of land will have to be fought for, and when the enemy think that a province has been conquered, more Abyssinian warriors will spring out of the ground, to the astonishment of the enemy's spies, and they will make further attempts to win back *their* country.

CHAPTER XXI

THE "WHITE EMPEROR" OF ABYSSINIA

WHEN I sent a telegram to the Associated Press describing General Virgin, I called him "Italy's Public Enemy No. 1." This nickname has become popular in Italy, and it is used in the Italian Press and once by Mussolini at a Cabinet meeting.

General Virgin is a Swede who came to Abyssinia in 1934, as military and foreign-political adviser to the Emperor. His predecessor was also a Swede but he was only concerned with foreign politics. As he did not have very much to do the Emperor decided, when he engaged General Virgin, to combine the duties of this post with that of military adviser. The General had been in command of the Swedish Air Force. He was fifty-nine, and was not an airman, but an infantryman, and had been put in charge of the Swedish air arm on account of his exceptional powers of organisation, which were no less useful in Abyssinia.

When he came to Abyssinia he had an easy time, preparing his plans, but before he had been six months in the country, the fatal skirmishes took place at Wal-Wal, and the Emperor's foreign-political and military adviser became very busy. He was no diplomat and began his career in diplomacy with an openness typical of a soldier. But the months after the Wal-Wal incident, the "difficult months" as he calls them, turned him into a genuine diplomat.

"I know that I am not loved by Italy," he used to say, "and if I wanted to go there for a cure, it would be difficult to get a passport!"

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The Italian Press published columns about him and maintain that the whole problem would have been solved if he had not been there, but the General takes this reproach as praise, and is proud to be able to help the Emperor through this difficult time.

It may be asked why the Emperor should get military help from Sweden when that country has not had to fight for 120 years.

General Virgin is not the only Swede in Abyssinia; there are so many Swedish doctors, engineers, planters, and missionaries, that one can honestly speak of the "invisible Swedish invasion." This power is not a political one; at least the Swedes do not use their influence in this way, and prefer to devote their energies to educational and other welfare work, perhaps in the hope of securing, at a later date, a good market for Swedish goods.

The Russians used to occupy the position now held by the Swedes. Although Abyssinia became a factor of some importance in the world under the rule of Menelik, she was still of minor international interest when the Russians began to take an interest in her. The Tsarist Government had two objects in view: first of all they were trying to get a footing in North-East Africa through Abyssinia, and secondly they wanted to win over the people to the Orthodox Church. They spent large sums of money on those ends, and reinforced Menelik's work of reform with gold and manufactures, including Russian rifles that are still seen to-day slung round the shoulders of the army.

Russian settlers came too, and their doctors, engineers and farmers were welcomed. After the revolution the Soviet were too taken up with their own affairs to take any more interest in Abyssinia, but a second Russian invasion began at this time. The Russian refugees remembered their friendship with Abyssinia and tried to set up their homes in this country, which became after Germany, France and Yugoslavia, an important refuge of the Russian aristocrats. But they did not know what they were coming to in Africa and they have since left. One only meets a few solitary representatives nowadays,

living lonely lives, disappointed in their own country and in Abyssinia, whose guests they are. When Russian interest in the country waned, the Swedes took their chance and in a short time had installed themselves as securely as the Russians before the war.

First of all they started a mission, and then other Swedes arrived including Dr. Kurt Hanner, who came not only as a surgeon but also as Swedish Consul-General. This doctor is an outstanding personality, taciturn but frank. As a surgeon he has a very sure hand, and through his many successes has come to be looked on as a miracle doctor. But he also carried out his consular work, and in a short time became an intimate of the Emperor, who consulted him on all important matters. The doctor worked on inconspicuously and Sweden's position in Abyssinia grew stronger, until recently he was able to go so far as to suggest that the Emperor should engage a Swedish general as his military adviser, and he arranged for his countryman to work alongside the Belgians. Through his influence the chief of the Abyssinian Red Cross was a Swedish doctor, and when the wireless station was taken over from the Italians a Swedish engineer was put in charge.

With the Swedes came their goods and so great is their control to-day that German, English and French products are ordered through Sweden. This happened, for instance, when instruments were ordered for the Imperial Hospital, although they had been manufactured in Germany. English and German medicines also come from Sweden, and I once saw huge consignments of salvarsan from the Deutsche I.G. Farbenindustrie—the Imperial Chemicals of Germany—that had not come from Frankfurt-on-the-Main where it had been produced, but from Stockholm. Swedish have a trade preference whether it is telephone apparatus or steel.

The Swedes seemed to have found in an inconspicuous way how to conquer the country peacefully.

It was Dr. Hanner who persuaded the King of Sweden to send the Crown Prince to Abyssinia. The prince came with

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all his family, Crown Princess Louise, who was Lady Louise Mountbatten, Princess Ingrid, and Prince Bertil. This was the first royal family to visit the country since the Emperor had been crowned and the very first time that a future king in Europe had come to pay his respects to Haile Selassie. They were received with great pomp and the Emperor gave his visitors priceless presents; gold and diamonds went back to Sweden in large quantities, and, as is the custom, the Crown Prince was given the finest lion in the Imperial kennels.

The Swedes' careful work was not over after the royal visit. When the Crown Prince reached home, King Gustav wrote to Haile Selassie in his own hand and began "Dear Brother." That was the Emperor's most memorable success. It was the achievement of his ambition to be recognised by a white monarch as "dear brother."

I discussed the influence of Sweden in Abyssinia with General Virgin whom I visited frequently, and he denied that his government had a special policy in that direction.

"Sweden is not Abyssinia's only counsellor," he argued. "Look at the financial adviser, Mr. Corlson. He is American. The judicial adviser is Mr. Overson, a Swiss, and the commercial adviser, Dr. Ewart, is a naturalised Abyssinian, although he was German. There are French, Italian and German missions and hospitals and an American mission for lepers. I do not see that Sweden has a preferential position. The Abyssinians are clever politicians and choose their counsellors from states who are not handicapped with world political interests. Representatives of great colonial powers are naturally ruled out, and the Emperor does not want to have German experts, as at the moment that would be a poor gesture to the great powers. And above all, just think of Siam! The Danes hold many more of the important positions there than we Swedes in Abyssinia, and no one has thought of Siam as a Danish colony!"

I went on to ask the General about the part played by the British.

"The English, I think," he replied, "do not like half-power. They have more experience than anyone in organising half-civilised countries, which really describes Abyssinia, but they only offer the benefit of this experience to countries where they can make their own conditions. England will not work unless she has at least a mandate over the country, and as she knows that the Abyssinians would not accept British control, she sits out of the game, although she is the only power respected by Abyssinia."

I often drank coffee with the General in the arbour in the courtyard of his large house that once belonged to Ras Kassa. These conversations taught me a lot about the country, for General Virgin was a keen observer and could give his thoughts vivid expression. He too was fascinated by the great contrasts that are met with in Abyssinia at every step. He was working on a history of the country, which was proof of his strong nerves if one considers that he is partly responsible for the history of the future.

"These old warrior kings are particularly interesting for a soldier," he told me, "and they could not be met in our own history. If there is war here, these old traditions of the warriors will automatically spring up again, for the Emperor will not have finished modernising his army by then."

And inevitably we came to speak of the war.

"Are you really expecting war?" I asked.

"One is forced to be prepared for it," he replied. "The incidents on the frontier are already a kind of guerilla war and the tribes who live in that district would like to fight, not on Imperial grounds but only to enlarge their collections of fearful trophies. When the Emperor sends forces to the frontier it does not necessarily mean that he is mobilising against the Italians; it is much more likely that he wants to keep these irresponsible tribes in check. But if the Emperor is against war, the Italians are for it. They seem to want it. I do not know whether war will begin as it usually

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does in Europe. There will probably be no official declaration. One fine day fighting will start, and there will be war!"

I asked what the prospects of the Abyssinians would be.

"The Italians have no easy task," he told me, "and in my opinion they under-estimate the military strength of this complicated country."

"Has Abyssinia a fixed form of tactics?" I asked.

"Do you mean modern military tactics?" General Virgin questioned me, and when I replied in the affirmative, he said:

"Heavens, from where could they have got that! Abyssinia has no general staff, so where could a fixed strategic policy come from? But they have certain plans. The Italians are already right into the country and they will be allowed to come further. The Abyssinians' idea will be to reserve their strength, just as they did at Aduwa, for a final blow. The further the Italians advance the more difficult their transport problems will become. It will be difficult to bring up reserves, and that suits the Abyssinians."

"What about aeroplanes?" I asked. "So much is said of the Italians' advantage in this sphere, and I heard that Air-Marshall Balbo was continually practising taking-off and landing in the desert. I was also told that over a thousand machines had been landed in the two Italian colonies."

"When I first came to Abyssinia," General Virgin continued, "the Emperor took into consideration that I was a commander in the Swedish Air Force, and he gave me the duty of organising an Abyssinian squadron. He had money and would have been perfectly ready to buy 'planes, but I refused downright. It would have been a mistake to get aeroplanes before we had pilots. I suggested to the Emperor that I should first of all found a flying-school, and after we had enough qualified pupils, we could think of buying machines. Then the trouble started on the frontier and we had to give up our plan.

"An air force would, as a matter of fact, have been superfluous; this country is not suited for an air arm. Firstly, there

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are no large bombers with a minimum range of eight hundred miles. Secondly, there are no emergency landing places. Thirdly, the country, especially in the north, is an unbroken mountain range, ten to fifteen thousand feet high, so that every aeroplane would have to fly at a record height all the time and that is out of the question with fighting machines. Fourthly, there are no towns to bomb. If the Italians destroyed a village it would be rebuilt next morning, and it would be a pointless butchery to work with undependable explosives which would probably only kill women and children. I cannot imagine a civilised power making war on these helpless creatures. There are no industrial centres, no arsenals, no railway junctions, that are the objectives usually sought by flyers. For the same reason an anti-aircraft protection is unnecessary. I repeat that Abyssinia has no use for an air force and neither they nor the Italians will achieve success in Abyssinia in the air."

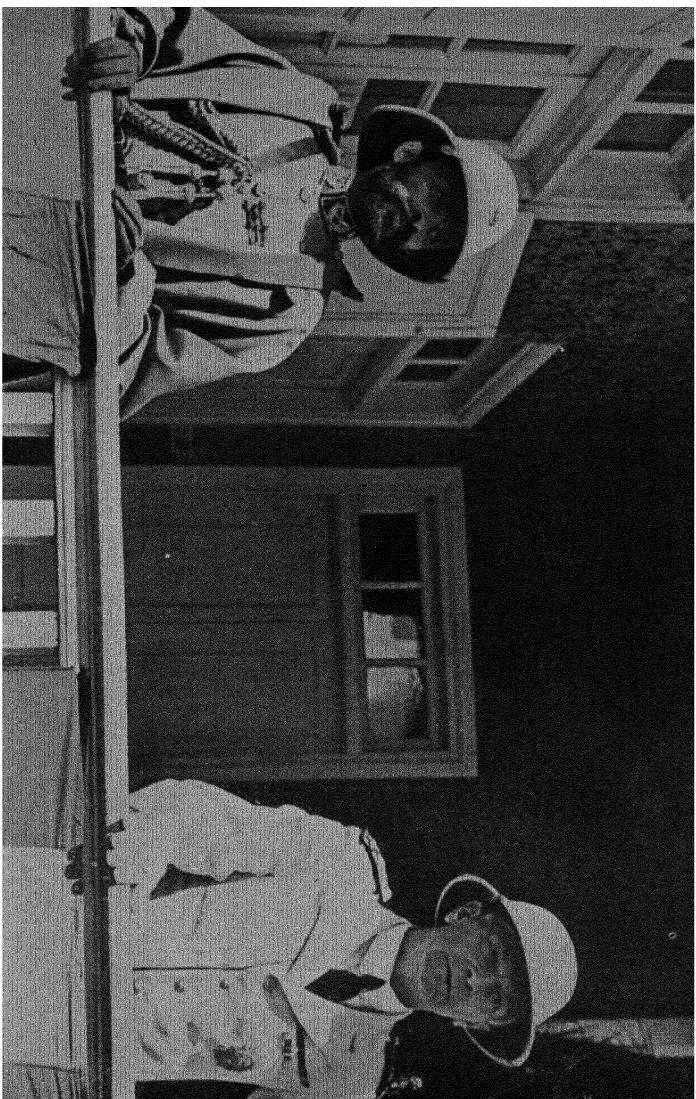
General Virgin works day and night fulfilling his contract with this black people with whom he has nothing in common. At that time he was creating something not unlike a general staff; he was organising a Red Cross service. He did not know whether he had started too late.

"Is it worth while?" he asked me, and I only shrugged my shoulders.

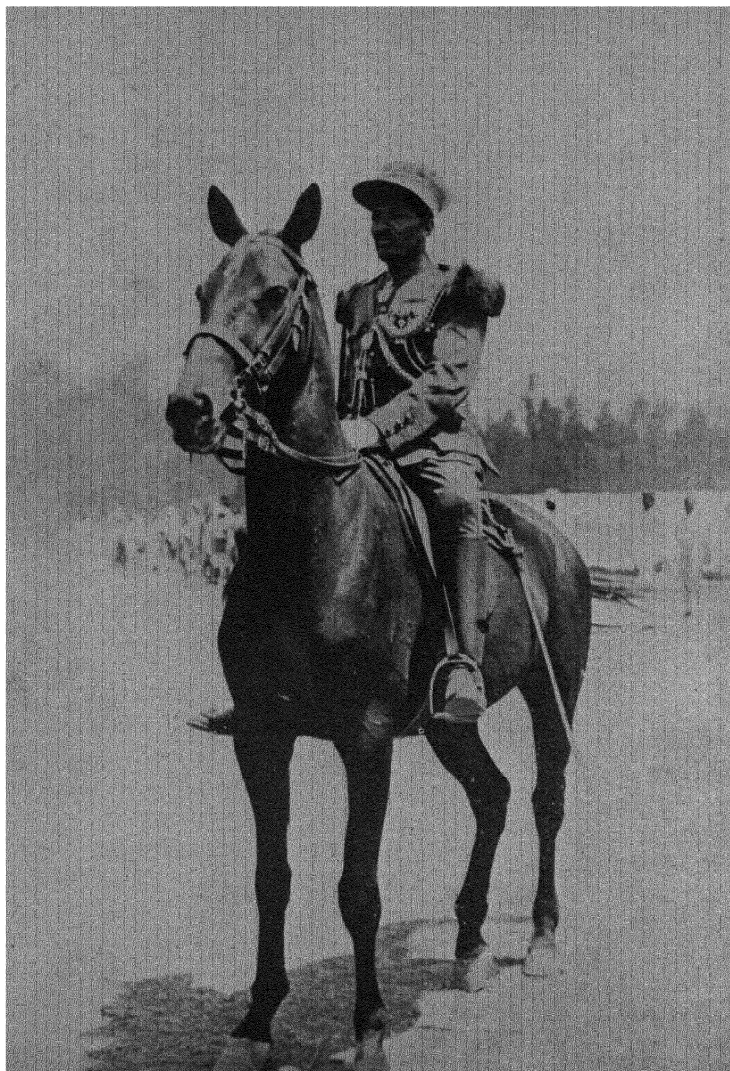
"Ah, but you see, I am a soldier and must do my duty! One never can tell, and in Africa the prophets usually misfire. In any case it will be no ordinary war."

Then he hurried off to the Emperor. He was kept busy! That day he had to answer an Italian Note, inspect a new kind of rifle, prepare a programme for the Emperor's visit to the Military College at Oletta, work out a policy for the Abyssinian Minister in Paris who represented the country at the League of Nations; it would be late before he returned to Ras Kassa's old house to take refuge in his book, and forget the present in the history of the petty kings of Abyssinia.

He never mentioned the difficulties that he had to put up



THE EMPEROR AND GENERAL VIRGIN



GENERAL BALAMBARAS MUKRIA, COMMANDER OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD OF OFFICERS

THE "WHITE EMPEROR" OF ABYSSINIA

with, but I knew that they existed. The Foreign Office where he did all the work, was jealous of him, and the Abyssinians had many secret ways of trying to make the General lose the Emperor's favour. His plans, that were worked out during nights of sleeplessness, and approved by the Emperor, were often suppressed. But worst of all was the Abyssinians' complete lack of a sense of duty and loyalty; they always suspected the General's work.

Even the Emperor was influenced by General Virgin's enemies, and while the Swede was branded in Italy as "Public Enemy No. 1" he was thought to be an agent in Abyssinia who was working against the country's interests. The Emperor's private secretary, Ato Wolde Georgis, was particularly troublesome, and he misinterpreted and stifled the General's plans more than anyone. Ato Wolde Georgis always won in these struggles with the Emperor, and General Virgin, who had arrived in Abyssinia a vigorous man, was already disheartened and broken in spirit. His health was affected by the climate and violent heart attacks hindered him in his work. But he did not let these trifles interfere and he was always at his post when required.

He had one special privilege in Abyssinia. When he drove to the palace he was allowed to use the Emperor's road. He owed this honour not to himself, but to his car, which could hardly climb the steep hill on the ordinary road. The Emperor was looking through his telescope one day, and noticed the General's car fighting against gravity. It was an old car, and as Haile Selassie was frightened that he would have to give him a new one, he preferred to waive his Imperial exclusiveness and allowed General Virgin to use his private road. It seemed the cheaper way.

But the people knew nothing of this ulterior motive. They only saw that the Swedish General drove on the Imperial road, and in their opinion he was an exalted personage, and as he drove past in Addis Ababa, they whispered: "Ferentshi Dshanhoi!"—the White Emperor.

CHAPTER XXII

ABYSSINIAN ADVENTURERS

THE day before the sun had shone and it was 90° F. in the shade. Addis Ababa was a white town; men and women wore white clothes and white tropical helmets, the white clothes of the natives reflected the light, and the horizon was a white glow in the distance. This morning Addis Ababa suddenly woke up to winter. Heavy clouds hung in the sky, the sun had vanished, and a cold, grey light overshadowed the town. Yesterday I liked the place, but now it looked sad and horribly Abyssinian. The streets were less crowded and a weird stillness had come over the town. Only a few native porters were to be seen, chanting in time with their slow movement. Suddenly it began to rain. No European cloudburst comes so suddenly or so furiously as this Abyssinian downpour. Sheets of water fell like thunder on the zinc roofs, the empty river beds became torrents and the sound of boulders rolling down the mountain-sides drowned the usual noises of the town. Everything was effaced by the tropical rain.

The rain poured down with such force that I did not think it could last more than a few minutes, but after two hours I could see no sign from my balcony window of it stopping. Mendrakos, the hotel manager, came in and remarked indifferently:

"The short rainy season has begun. It really is high time for the fields are scorched."

He did not consider the rain was a drama of Nature; he was moved neither one way nor the other. And no wonder, for he had lived through twenty-eight rainy seasons!

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It came down harder than ever, as if to show that this was not a short shower but a long rainy season. The empty streets gradually filled up again. The Abyssinians had stripped to the waist, and danced about, calling and shrieking in this wild downpour. I thought it curious that the day before when the sun was scorching them, they could not be moved into putting off their shamas, and now, when it was suddenly bitterly cold, they should go about half naked. But the rain seemed to be their friend and their pleasure, and they welcomed it exuberantly, singing songs of praise, making up their own verses and chanting them in unmusical voices.

"The rainy season brings the corn," Mendrakos murmured, "and this year they have another reason for being glad. They think that it will delay hostilities for the next months."

It rained all day and the following night, and I gradually became used to it. The first day I stayed indoors, but the next day I was standing without a hat, wet to the skin, wiping the water out of my eyes, on the bank of a river that had not flowed at all before the rain. It had been only a deep ravine without a drop of water on the stony bed. In twenty-four hours it was a raging torrent 100 metres wide, that surged with deep foaming water. Half the population of Addis Ababa was on the banks. They had left their huts in festive spirit, and as the river rose they amused themselves as if they were at a fair.

When I returned to the hotel I saw on the gauge that it had rained ten inches in twenty hours, more than could fall in twenty days in Europe. It was as cold as it had been when I first arrived, and I thought I must leave at once if I wanted to get to Ogaden. So I went into my room and began to pack.

Packing up after a seven weeks' visit is almost a removal, and everything was turned upside-down when someone knocked at the door.

"Come in!" I called from the depths of a bag, and in walked a little stout man with a very red nose.

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"Are you Monsieur Farago?" he asked, and instead of waiting for an answer he went up to my table and made room for a whisky bottle and two glasses which he had in his hand. After he had done that, he explained himself.

"Excuse this onslaught! My name is Belloni. I live next door, and have bored myself to death since yesterday with this frightful rain. I thought you might be bored too, and it is more pleasant to be bored with company. I hope I am not disturbing you?"

"Not at all," I replied, irritated and suspicious. I could not imagine what this little thick man wanted from me. I sat down and looked him up and down. As we were fellow-guests our conversation naturally began with scandal about the other people staying in the hotel.

"A really interesting set," I said, "everyone an adventurer!" The little man protested.

"The word 'adventurer' is a relative term. Julius Cæsar, Charles the Fifth, Henry the Eighth, Napoleon, Christopher Columbus, were all called adventurers in their time. That ought to be sufficient warning that this delicate word must be used with care!"

Of course the man who spoke these words of wisdom from behind his whisky glass was an adventurer himself. He spat out his own mystery:

"It is amusing to turn up suddenly in Addis Ababa with the Italian name of Giuseppe de Belloni, a forged French passport, and no definite purpose. I have nothing to look for, and I do not really want to find anything, but my ambiguous appearance in these troubled times enchants me. If you like, that is my adventure."

There are quite a number of these Bellonis in Addis Ababa, and my new friend, the adventurer, knew them all.

"They do not often come by train from Jibuti," he told me. "That would be too simple. They prefer to take the caravan route from Khartoum or Zeila. We certainly are not welcomed here as guests although we do not want to raise a shindy.

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We gentlemen come to make a little money as quickly and as inconspicuously as possible. The most obvious means of doing this is espionage, but Abyssinia is not a country of State secrets, and nothing much is expected of spies here. Spies of international repute do not come because the country is too far away, and there is only small business to be done, while they already have all they can do in Europe. The big international spy agencies only send their second strings to Addis Ababa. They, of course, do not mind who they work for, but they have not had much luck with the Abyssinians, who use their own spies and occasionally a few Greeks and Armenians."

The adventurer, Giuseppe de Belloni, became furious as he spoke of these mongrel spies. It was a kind of class-consciousness that roused his indignation.

"They are frightfully dull, these beginners, and they work dirt cheap and take the bottom out of the market for us. You know, for example, that Syrian who pretends that he can speak twenty-eight languages? Well, the Italians wanted to test him and he was given the simple duty of finding out, at the Abyssinian soldiers' manœuvres, the strength of the army, including men, animals, and batteries. The poor man went off at once and took down notes so profusely that he was seen by the Belgian officers and chucked out."

Abyssinia has a kind of anti-spy organisation, but it has no means of bringing to heel the gentlemen whom Belloni spoke about. The criminal police is, of course, quite as useless, and is always at the service of the highest bidder, only making victims of the law-breakers who do not pay their bribes.

The Emperor has no power over foreigners. He may not arrest or try them, and when their rights of extra-territoriality do not hold good, they must be brought before their own consular court. The Consuls in Addis Ababa execute justice on their own countrymen, and every Consul automatically becomes a judge. The numberless judges of the Emperor are only for the natives. In international cases, when the opposing

parties are of different nationalities, or when a European is against an Abyssinian, the trial takes place in the so-called "mixed court" where the Emperor's representative sits. He is a Swiss and hears the case as put forward by the Abyssinian's counsel and the European Consul.

Belloni knew his way about in the labyrinth of Abyssinian law, and he also knew the way out, but he exercised some caution before the Abyssinian anti-spy league.

"Their eyes are sufficiently wide open to hear about every journey into the interior in time to stop it. It is illegal to travel to the north without a permit, but as it is impossible to get permits, the only thing to do is to try to slip off without one. But this Greek who is in charge of the anti-spy organisation, hears about these journeys at once, and in the travellers' own interests brings them back quickly to Addis Ababa."

He gulped down another whisky and asked me:

"By the way, have you heard about the spies who have been arrested to-day?"

"What!" I said with astonishment. "Spies have been arrested?"

"My dear fellow," Belloni replied with a touch of contempt in his voice, "what kind of a reporter are you? That is the only landmark in this filthy flood of rain!"

At that moment Herr Löwenthal came in, just as if he had taken his cue, bringing in one of the palace gardeners whose duty it was to report all the Emperor's visitors to me.

"I have something very important to tell you alone," he said consequentially, so we went on to the balcony, and he told me Belloni's tale about the spies.

"Heavens above!" I cried. "Where are they?"

"No one knows," replied Herr Löwenthal, but Belloni knew, and when we went into the room again I mentioned to him what Herr Löwenthal had said. I sent my Press chief to telephone the town hall and try to get information. But Belloni laughed at us.

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"They are here, in the 'Prison Imperial!' " he said. "Rooms five, seven and twelve are their cells!"

In a few minutes I was knocking at the door of room 7.

"Come in!" the occupier called out in French, and when I entered I saw no one. Suddenly a voice from the bed asked: "What do you want, monsieur?"

A young man in hunting clothes and leather boots, was lying on top of the blankets. He had a thick compress round his neck, and medicine bottles stood on his bed-table. The room was untidy; rucksacks, rifles and a saddle were littered all over the floor, and it was obvious that he had just arrived.

I introduced myself, and the Frenchman got up.

"I am glad that you have come. My name is Balsan. François Balsan, a nephew of Colonel Balsan who married a Vanderbilt. You will scarcely believe what has happened to my friend and me! Wait a minute!" and he went over to room 5, and returned with a fair young man.

"This is my friend, Count d'Oncien du Chaffardon. He will tell you everything. I am too ill to speak. I have a fever and I am going to die, monsieur."

The Count was much less excited than Monsieur Balsan, and smiled at his friend, who was having a bad attack of nerves.

"We wanted to leave Abyssinia with a caravan via the Sudan," he told me, "but we were accused of being Italian spies, and brought back to Addis Ababa, where we are under arrest!"

Then I heard the story of these two, who were adventurers for adventure's sake, without the experience and cynicism of Belloni.

The young Count had arrived first in Abyssinia. He had apparently no reason for coming.

"I have," he said, "a passion for hunting and I am an enthusiastic globe-trotter. Abyssinia is *the* country for enjoying both of these pastimes."

For a long time he was the most respectable European in Addis Ababa; he was only seen in riding kit and in full evening

dress; he was a welcome guest at the palace, and what is even more significant, also at the legations. Soon he became the intimate and trusted adviser of the Crown Prince, Asfou Wossen.

When the Crown Prince was ordered to Dessye by his father, Count d'Oncien du Chaffardon asked for permission to go with him, but the Emperor refused. The Count went in spite of this, and before he left, he sent a telegram to Orleans where his friend François Balsan had a cloth factory. Some time later Balsan arrived in Abyssinia.

The Emperor soon heard that the Count was staying with the Crown Prince, and swift messengers were sent with the order that the Frenchman was to return immediately to Addis Ababa. When the Count received the order he was in the mountains with Balsan.

"I am not an adventurer," he told me. "I am an archæologist who has studied in Paris. I discovered an old legend that mentioned treasure that had been left in Abyssinia by the Queen of Sheba, so I came to the country, and without telling anyone of my discovery, made some investigations, and found out that the treasure was hidden in the caves of Dessye. Colossal treasure must be lying there! Whoever finds it will be as rich and famous as the Englishmen who discovered Tutankhamen's tomb. I made friends with the Crown Prince, and tried to carry out my plan with his help, but things went badly. The Emperor did not approve of our friendship, and tried with all the means in his power to separate us. As a last resort he had my French friend and me branded as spies and brought us back by force to Addis Ababa. We were only fifty miles from the Sudan frontier when his soldiers overtook us. We suffered terribly at their hands; we were beaten and given nothing to eat. It was awful. We were betrayed, I know, by a Greek who kept a spirit bar. He is a spy of the Abyssinians."

The Count certainly had to pay dearly for his love of adventure.

ABYSSINIAN ADVENTURERS

"I abandoned my plan and I will deny the existence of the treasure that I was not allowed to find, in a book which will be the 'Baedeker' of treasure-seekers who should be unlucky enough to think of looking for gold in Abyssinia."

Balsan expostulated on the bed.

"It will cost these Abyssinians a pretty penny! Firstly I will sue them for two hundred thousand francs compensation, and secondly they will have to send me by 'plane to Khar-toum."

These words were hardly out of his mouth, when he was called to the telephone. He returned in a few minutes, like a pricked balloon.

"We leave to-morrow—by train," he said. "The Abyssinians have not complied with our wishes!"

"Excellent, then I can travel with you," I comforted him, and then I went to "cell 12" to visit the third prisoner.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE POOR FREED SLAVES

ROOM 12 was empty! I drove at once to the town hall where the criminal office headquarters are. Crowds stood in front of the building, debating excitedly this second haul in recent days. That these arrests should be made just when the rain had started was a sign from God, and a confirmation of the miraculous powers of the rain.

There was great activity inside, too, but the people whom I wanted to see were not there.

"Blatta Taklu, the mayor, is at the palace with the chief of police," explained the interpreter, who recognised me from our meeting at the church festival.

"What has happened then?" I asked, and to my astonishment he really told me what had happened. The third "prisoner," I heard, was not a spy but a slave-dealer, called Ugo Iacchia, an Italian student who had only just arrived from Milan.

"He is an *agent provocateur*," the interpreter told me. I went straight to the telegraph office and sent off 300 words to London on this interesting incident. I considered this news to be a farewell present, as I was going to leave the next day, but the case of the Italian student was shaping so interestingly that I decided to await developments in Addis Ababa.

When I returned to the town hall, I was received at once by Blatta Taklu, who had my telegram before him in an Amharic translation. He was politeness itself.

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"Thank you," he said, "for telegraphing the truth to the world! This Italian only came to prejudice everyone against us!"

I knew how serious this problem of slavery was, and it was being debated more than ever then. Italy was trying behind the scenes at the League of Nations to prove that the Emperor had not fulfilled his obligations in connection with the slave trade. But they need not have troubled to send out this student, who could only injure Italy, and the Abyssinians were sharp enough to be able to exploit this attempt to their own purposes. That was the only piece of clever propaganda work that I heard of all the time that I was in Abyssinia.

The problem of the Abyssinian slave traffic is just as dark a chapter in their story as all the others. It is said in Europe that slavery goes on in Abyssinia just as it used to do. The Emperor has always to listen to reproaches. It is considered a great impoliteness by Abyssinians to raise this question, for the Emperor's own officers are, on the other hand, highly indignant that the slaves have been abolished. The arrest of Ugo Iacchia now seemed to be my opportunity for studying the whole question.

Blatta Kidane Mariam Abera, my permanent informer, told me, categorically, that slavery had been finally abolished in 1924, and that the penalty for keeping slaves was imprisonment for ten years with a fine of 500 talers. He took me later to a school which had been started a few years ago for the children of the liberated slaves. This was the Emperor's organisation which he paid for himself, and it made a very great impression on me. These children were pitch-black Shankalis, with strong negroid characteristics. They wore a uniform consisting of sweaters with miniature Abyssinian flags on the breast and little caps such as the Italian Ballilas wear. Their Abyssinian teacher explained the school's objects:

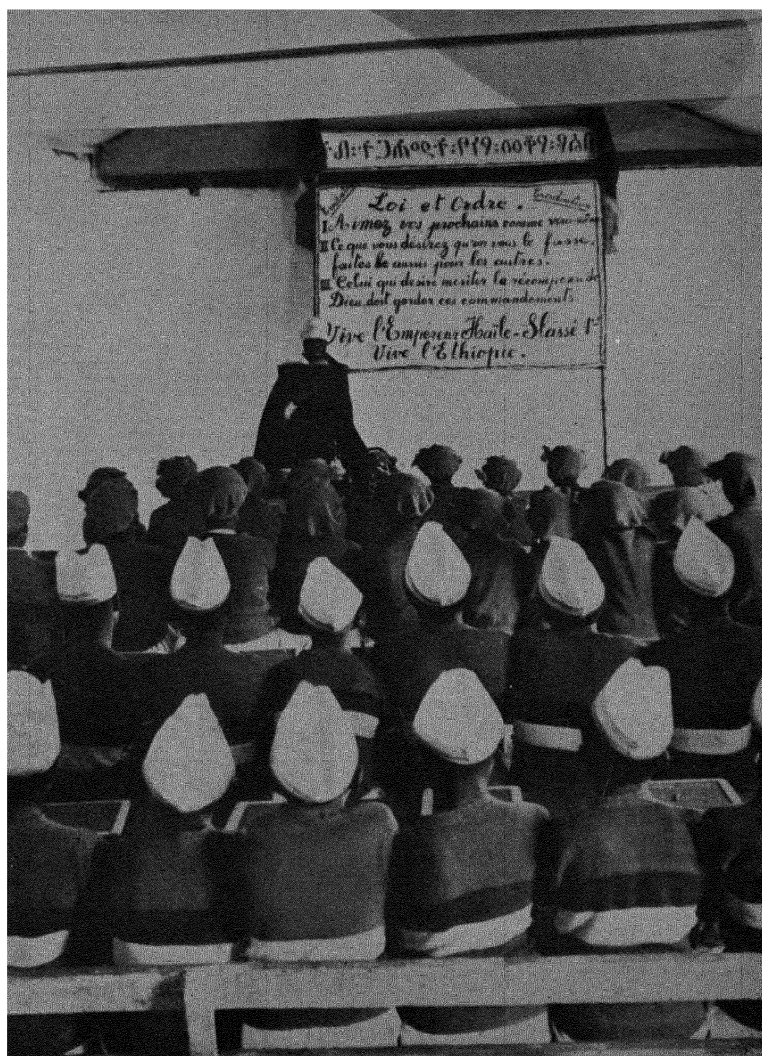
"The Emperor trains these children of former slaves for different trades. We have, for instance, classes for joiners, plumbers, weavers and masons."

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

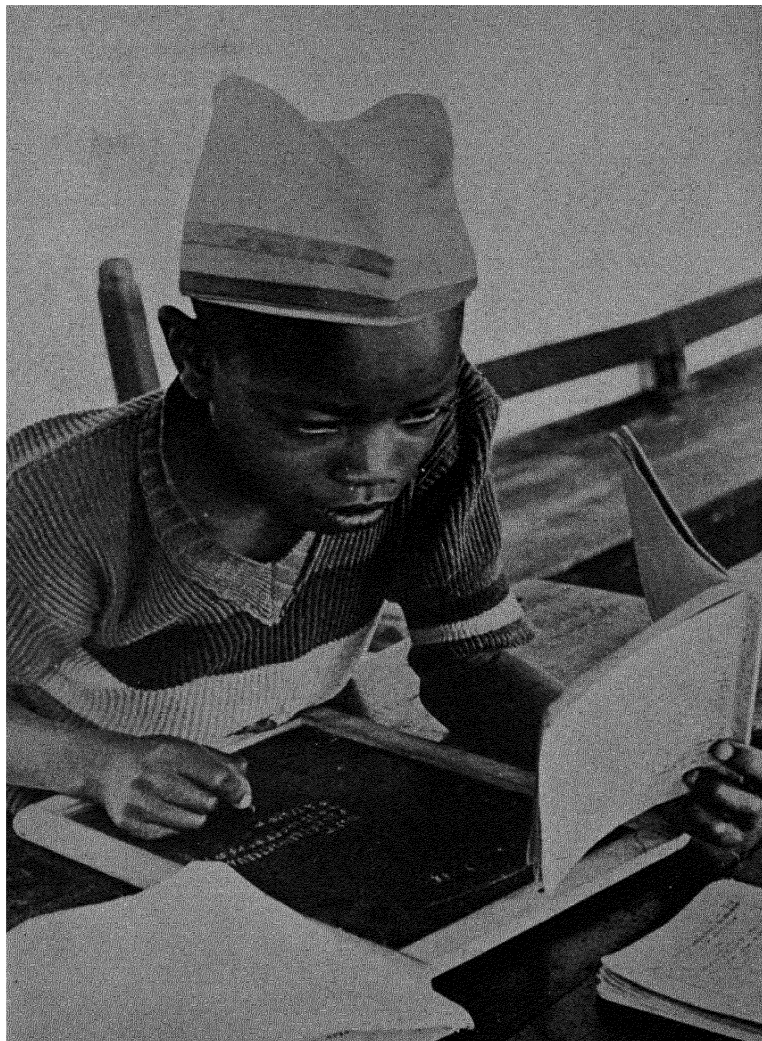
The classrooms were furnished with benches that the children had made themselves. When we came in they rose to their feet and sang the national anthem. Then their teacher asked them questions that one would hardly have expected to be answered by six- and ten-year-old children. They had to recite paragraphs from the law liberating slaves, and to say a great deal on the whole subject. Everything went without a hitch, but it was quite patent that special preparations had been made for our visit and that our interests had been studied.

After leaving the school we went to Arat Kilo, a place near the palace, to inspect the slave police. This force's duties corresponds to the work of the bootlegging police in the United States of America during prohibition times. They have to ferret out slaves and slave-dealers and bring them to justice, and to surprise the illegal slave-markets, and, in fact, to impede the whole traffic as much as possible. This was how the problem was represented officially, but when Blatta Kidane left me, I took matters into my own hands and was able to see the true state of affairs for myself.

I talked with slaves. They can still be met in Abyssinia, but they are in no way down-trodden pariahs. Slavery is a trade like a joiner's or a shoemaker's. It is an occupation in Abyssinia and the word loses here the horror that it stirs up in European minds. An Abyssinian's slave is of higher rank than his servant, for slaves have grown up for two or three generations with their masters, and it is not uncommon for a slave-owner to marry the daughter of one of his slaves, while her father remains under bondage. The slaves were happy then and did not want freedom. When the law of abolition was enforced in 1924 it perplexed both parties, but particularly the slaves who had been set free, for their liberation simply meant that, at a day's notice, they were homeless. When Haile Selassie, then Ras Tafari, undertook to abolish slavery to become a member of the League of Nations, he did not foresee the difficulties that would stand in his way.



SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN OF FREED SLAVES



HIS FATHER WAS A SLAVE

THE POOR FREED SLAVES

The slaves were paid no wages, but their masters fed, clothed and sheltered them. Suddenly the owners were obliged to free their slaves and to pay them like servants, but it did not follow that they had money because they had been able to feed them, and the result was that most of these poor wretches were turned out without support.

Then began the most interesting unemployment problem in history—the slave unemployment. Hundreds of thousands of them went workless and hungry, and were forced to beg in the villages.

Instead of giving these new beggars money the old slave-owners finally took them back into their service, where they had been always. Then the Government began to hunt down the owners, who persisted in keeping slaves under the old conditions, with the result that the slaves grew bolder, and once they were back to work and had food to eat, they demanded wages, and, if their request was refused, they reported their masters to the authorities. Nevertheless they weep to-day, eleven years after their liberation, about the "good old days," when they could still serve as slaves and did not possess the same rights as their masters.

When the former slave-owners had to give up their slaves on these financial grounds and the "slave unemployment" increased steadily, Arab slave-dealers appeared in the country, coming across the Red Sea in little dshunkas from Hedshas, Yemen Asir, Oman Hadramaut and Hasa. They landed on the lonely coast of French Somaliland, and entered Abyssinia from the north, most of them making Gondar their base. They were ready to take the unemployed slaves to Arabia, where no "cruel" laws against slavery existed. They did business on a huge scale. Thousands of the liberated slaves sold themselves body and soul to these dealers, who smuggled them across the frontier and transported them to Arabia. The dshunkas were overcrowded, and the Arabs never hesitated in breaking their promises to keep the slaves in good condition. The black freight was packed in, man crushed against man,

and whoever complained was thrown overboard. Frightful diseases broke out and ravaged these miserable creatures, but the dealers made short work of their dead by hurling them into the sea. They did not have to be sparing with their cargo, for plenty of liberated slaves awaited their return in Abyssinia.

Gondar is still the centre of the slave traffic. Slave police are stationed there, so the famous slave-market in the main square has disappeared, but he who wants a slave in Gondar can have one for the asking. Everyone who arrives at the town is questioned discreetly, and whoever has the intention of obtaining a slave is led by a guide down to the secret market.

In the dealers' cellars, which are the most terrible places in the world, the male and female slaves are kept naked to allow the buyers to judge them better, and they are manacled by chains to the pillars. Here the dealers offer them for sale. The cells of the Spanish Inquisition and Ivan the Terrible were nurseries compared with the secret slave-market of Gondar, which only exists because these Abyssinians were liberated without a transition period.

The Italian student, Ugo Iacchia, found no difficulty in picking up two slaves. They were children of thirteen and fourteen, and cost 160 talers. Before the Italian received delivery he was caught by the police.

It looked as if Italy would be compromised. The Abyssinian Government asked various questions that Iacchia could not answer. He could give no convincing reason why he had come to Abyssinia from Milan, nor could he explain how he had got money for the journey and the price of the slaves, and when asked why he wanted them he gave a childish reply:

"I came to Abyssinia because I heard that slaves could be bought, and I wanted to be a real master like the Romans, who were allowed to keep slaves."

He signed a statement to this effect.

THE POOR FREED SLAVES

The buyer had been caught, and now the hunt for the seller began. But this was the Criminal Police's lucky day, and he was seized within a short time. Their efforts had not been in vain, for the man turned out to be an Abyssinian, well known to the authorities—a former servant of a well-known figure in North-East Africa, Henry de Monfried.

De Monfried, the well-known French writer, has had his adventure books about the mysteries of the Red Sea translated into many languages. He has an easy style and his stories are exciting. He is the Edgar Wallace of the Red Sea, but in the countries which he describes with such a talented pen he is unpopular. His name is a byword in Abyssinia, where he spent many years and where he dare not return. He is one of the few foreigners ordered out of the country; if he goes back he might be penalised with his life. When he lived there he used to offer his services to the Abyssinians, but they refused. He intrigued and tried to stir up sedition among the chiefs. He engineered countless plots. But one day he went too far and he had to leave. Of course, he wrote a book afterwards letting loose a storm against Abyssinia.

He set up new headquarters in Jibuti and tried to stir up trouble for the English in the Gulf of Aden, but all the time Abyssinia remained his main objective, and after the Wal-Wal incident he was naturally ready to help the Italians. He went to Eritrea and negotiated with the Governor-General, de Bono, and soon after his servant was sent to Addis Ababa, with Ugo Iacchia.

Monfried's ingenious plan was to obtain documentary evidence of the Abyssinian slave trade. But it fell through, and it does the Italians no credit if they had anything to do with this adventurer, even indirectly. The Italian Legation was told nothing of the whole matter and did not hear of Iacchia's arrival in Addis Ababa. Count Vinci was dismayed when he was informed of the arrest. The Italian Consul was sent to the police office and was present at the student's interrogation and signed the protocol.

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

It was midnight by the time that I had made my final investigations and returned to the hotel. The lights had been turned off, and I had to feel my way up to my room. I saw a faint stream of light under my door and I opened it cautiously. Blatta Taklu, the mayor, was sitting at my table with an Abyssinian police inspector and his interpreter. I could not understand this midnight visit. They stood up when I entered, and made a low bow. The interpreter began to speak:

"We are glad that you have shown a sympathetic understanding for our country, and you will be the only European and the only journalist to see the documents of the Iacchia case."

Then they took some papers out of a despatch-case, and showed me the protocol that had been drawn up after Ugo Iacchia's second examination. I learned nothing new from this list of childish questions and answers, but the document was of immense importance to the Abyssinians. Most important of all was the signature of the Italian Consul.

"The Italian Legation asked us to hand over the student to them and we granted their request, on condition that he would be tried according to our law. They agreed and he will appear next Monday at the mixed court."

Two rooms away slept Ugo Iacchia, the *agent provocateur*, who had fallen at the first fence of a hazardous career. He was no hero, as events on the following days proved. He was asked to go to his legation, but he ignored the message, and still paid no heed when he got another urgent summons. That evening we were sitting in the large dining-room in the hotel, and Ugo Iacchia was sitting at another table eating his dinner without any forebodings of evil. He was ordering a bottle of Bianchi, when two men walked into the room. They looked very serious, and had their coat-collars turned up. They looked round the room and then walked straight up to Ugo Iacchia. He turned pale; the two men overpowered him and marched him out of the dining-room. We felt that

THE POOR FREED SLAVES

we were spectators of an exciting detective drama. I followed them, but was only in time to see the tail-lights of a car disappearing in the distance.

Ugo Iacchia never returned to the Hotel Imperial. When Monsieur Mendrakos, the manager, packed up his things, he did not find much. Ugo Iacchia had travelled all the way from Milan with a couple of shirts. Apart from them his case was empty.

I could not get permission to be present at the trial. The Abyssinians had no power to grant me one and the Italians refused. But Blatta Taklu dropped in immediately after the case was over, to tell me the result.

"He has got six years," he said, but he did not look satisfied.

"What is wrong, Blatta Taklu?" I asked.

But the mayor would not enlighten me, and later I heard that the Italian had to serve his time in an Italian prison, and it irritated the mayor to see his prisoner slipping through his fingers.

The two young boys who had been the centre of all the trouble were set free, but they were not overjoyed, for they had been happy to be slaves again.

PART THREE

WAR

CHAPTER XXIV

ADIEU, ADDIS ABABA

It was still raining heavily, and I had to hurry for I wanted to reach Ogaden before the long rainy season. Spring and summer have their special rains. The so-called small rainy season lasts from March to the beginning of May. During this period the rain falls heavily but not continuously.

The long rainy season begins in the middle of June, and no European can imagine how much rain falls between then and the end of September. Gorges many yards wide become rivers, and bridges are swept away. Life comes to a standstill, and for weeks on end the natives cannot leave their huts or dream of travelling to the interior, much less of waging a war.

In the province of Ogaden, where the war will probably break out, the rainy season is less severe than in other districts, and the ground is not entirely flooded. The river beds, however, are full, and the Jubba and Shebbeli rivers are navigable for 400 miles. The rainy season would not have impeded the Italian advance in this district as is often believed, and if Mussolini had had enough forces in Italian Somaliland, he could have declared war. He had then only about thirty or fifty thousand men in that colony, including the unreliable native soldiers, while the Abyssinians were about 200,000 strong, the largest force that they had ever levied. So I decided to go to Ogaden to examine the theatre of war at close quarters.

One day was hardly enough for my leave-takings. I received visits from distinguished men of the country through-

out the day. They expressed regret that I had to leave, but if they had known that I was planning to go to Ogaden they would have certainly expressed still more.

A guard of honour from the garrison, army officers and ministers, including the Emperor's representative, were on the platform the day I left. This official farewell was not for me but for Major André Polet, who was returning to Belgium. My friends also turned out in full, and Blatta Kidane Mariam Aberra brought me a gift from the Emperor, a gold medal with the Emperor's head on one side and St. George on the other. Kenjasmatsch Bakala was also present and a great many other Abyssinians, all with gifts. I knew that something was expected from me in return and Kenjasmatsch Bakala said quite openly that he wanted a hunting rifle, and gave me exact details of the type and calibre.

In the first-class carriage the atmosphere was not so restrained as on my previous journey, for we were now all good friends from Addis Ababa. Major André Polet was accompanied by his three servants. These young boys had served him for five years and were loth to separate from him. Major André Polet even considered taking them with him to Europe but he was warned against this. Europeans have often become so attached to their servants that they have taken them home. But these simple Abyssinians seeing the world for the first time, are overwhelmed. The temptations of European cities prove too much for them. They soon begin to cheat their masters, and go from bad to worse.

It was a moving scene when Major André Polet's servants said good-bye at Mojjo. They kissed his hands and his feet before leaving the carriage, and then, in sheer desperation, they wanted to throw themselves in front of the engine and had to be held back by the crowds.

My servant's leave-taking was not so exciting, but touching in its own way. Tierra said to me that he had never had so good a master, and two people would fill his heart always; his Emperor and myself. When I paid him his wages I

asked him what he was going to do with it. His face lit up as he told me of his dream.

"I am going to the interior to shoot a great animal. Then I shall be a hero and will not need to work any more."

Herr Löwenthal was also staying behind, and I was exceedingly sorry to have to leave such an unusual character in Africa. He seemed to have found a profession through me, and he had already found a new post before I left. He was going to be "news chief" to some other journalist.

Herr Klimsch, a representative of a Brunn armaments firm was travelling by the same train. He never wearied of telling stories and he had an interesting stock of them. His beat was Arabia and Abyssinia, exciting ground for an armaments merchant.

"Exciting! I should think so! but not paying. These unruly peoples round the Red Sea need plenty of weapons for their eternal battles and conspiracies. But my firm works on a cash-down basis and they have not got any ready money! It is rather interesting too that I could sell far more in Abyssinia before the conflict started than I can now. I once stayed eight months in Addis Ababa alone, but now competition is too great."

An unusual passenger was travelling second-class which is used principally by the better type of Abyssinian. He was Mr. C. C. Collier, the English governor of the Bank of Ethiopia. He was going back to England for a holiday. I wondered at his thrift at the time, but when I was back in Europe I heard from an acquaintance of his that he was not an Englishman but a Scot, which may explain his modesty.

We were in the desert again and we had to spend a disturbed night in Awash. This time it was not the insects that grudged me a night's rest. At midnight I was wakened with a weight on my chest. I struck a light and found that it was a lizard. I was shaken and at the same time irritated, because the station was not under Abyssinian, but French control, and it is a heinous offence for a European company to tolerate such conditions, and to provide their passengers with such surprises.

After Awash we came into the rainy season again and our

train had to stop frequently, unable to move against the violence of the rain. We made very slow progress for the line was flooded. The River Awash looked splendid. It had been a wide ravine when we had passed it before, but now it was a mighty river swollen by the mountain torrents.

It is typical of the ignorance that obtains about Abyssinia that I had read in one of my travel books of melting snow rushing down from the mountains. The mountains in the country are very high but they are not often even snow-capped, and no word for snow is to be found in common speech. Snow would be an unusual sight five degrees north of the equator, and the rivers are flooded by the rain alone.

Diredawa also welcomed us with a cloud-burst. The town looked empty, and even the attack on the first-class passengers was weaker than usual, and for the next three days we were prisoners of the storm. We had wanted to travel straight on the next morning to Harar, the capital of the province of Ogaden, but we could not find a chauffeur who would undertake the journey over the flooded roads.

It did not rain on the third day but we would have been better off if it had. Now the heat was unbearable and a new plague came to keep us company: mosquitoes. Diredawa was surrounded by water and malarial mosquitoes had improvised breeding grounds in these temporary lakes. They hummed through the town in the evening and we were not sorry to be able to continue our journey on the fourth day.

The drive from Diredawa to Harar was a memorable experience. Private cars are useless on Abyssinia's "motor roads" and heavy lorries have to carry passengers as well as goods. We had to hire one of these big vehicles in Diredawa.

We left the town at a good speed but the lorry soon stopped at the first toll-station. After hooting for a long time, the toll-collector appeared and charged us a taler a head. We had to pass these toll-houses frequently and on that account our trip was not cheap. Our lorry only cost us 4 talers each but the tolls were half as much again. After passing the first

toll-gate we were in the war area. We saw some long rows of cannons that would have been decorating a museum in any other country. They were old rusted guns of the Thirty Years' War period.

My interpreter told me the history of these cannons.

"They are relics of the good old times of Menelik. After Aduwa the Emperor wanted to reorganise his army on a large scale, so he commissioned the Austrian Consul in Addis Ababa to go to Vienna and buy some modern guns. Two Abyssinians went with him and the little commission was well provided with money. Once in Vienna they found the night-clubs more interesting than the armaments works, and their funds were spent on frivolous ladies instead of heavy artillery. The day came when so little of their money was left that they could not buy a single modern gun. The Abyssinians wanted to use the poison that they always carried about with them, when the Consul saved the situation.

"'Menelik,' he suggested, 'will surely not know the difference between old and new guns, and we have easily enough money left to buy old cannons from a scrap-iron merchant!'

"It was no sooner said than done. These worthless museum pieces came to Abyssinia and the gentlemen of the commission went to a prison island, for Menelik did recognise old guns when he saw them."

Soon our lorry had left the valley and we were travelling quickly through big cactus woods towards the mountains. The road became more and more hazardous, and we were continually being held up by rocks that had tumbled down from the mountains, through which this natural road turned and twisted. We were now on the main road of Ethiopia. It had been built when Ras Makonnen was ruling in Harar. Ten thousand slaves had hewn it out of the mountain crags; it was a miracle of primitive road building, for these simple slaves had none of the advantages of modern road engineering.

This road was more than beautiful; it had also great strategic and political importance, for it was the only connection

between the railway and the threatened province of Ogaden. Once this road was destroyed the province would be shut off from the rest of the world, and the Abyssinians would not be able to bring up reinforcements.

The lorry took the bends at breakneck speed and in another hour and a half we had climbed the last hill and had covered eight miles. The country was quite different now, for we were going through the Abyssinian "granary." Shankalis, black slaves of the rich Abyssinian peasants, were working in the fields with prehistoric ploughs pulled by zebus. Market gardens were also being cultivated with ancient tools. All round us were orange groves, coffee and cotton plantations, and well-filled gardens that cheated the low hills by being built in terraces on their slopes. This was the hinterland of the war area.

We had to travel more slowly through this less mountainous country for the rain had damaged the sand road. We had to cross river-beds that had already dried up but the broken stone bridges told their tale of the fury of the flood.

Then our lorry stuck fast. We could not get it out of the ruts for hours, and when we did the same thing happened over and over again; we got out, unloaded, shoved till we were sick. We had left Dire-dawa at six in the morning and it was two o'clock and we had only covered twenty miles at an average of two and a half miles an hour.

But every journey comes to an end, and eventually our driver pointed to a town in the distance:

"There is Harar!"

In the distance the wide town reminded me of a toy fort. It was surrounded by stout walls which could only be entered through the five gates.

The gates were wide open but the guard sprawled lazily under the arches and only the customs officials represented authority, as the picturesque people streamed through. There were Somali and Harari women dressed in Japanese fabrics; a few Amharis, who are looked on as guests although they govern the town; Galli women carrying huge loads on

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their shoulders; Danakil warriors with poisoned spears. Donkey caravans passed in and out, but no camels, as they could not have managed the narrow streets.

Four thousand Abyssinian recruits were exercising on a large square along one side of the town wall. They were still in civil clothes, but the native officers were in Japanese khaki uniform. I could not help recalling what the Emperor had once told me:

"We have concentrated no troops in Ogaden. The whole garrison consists of three hundred men."

Either the commander-in-chief of the Abyssinian Army was badly informed or else he thought that he could keep these forces a secret from foreign journalists. On our way from Diredawa we had passed troops who had come by train to Diredawa and were then marching on to Ogaden.

We put up at the only hotel in the town, the Imperatrice. Harar looked sinister at the first glance, and one felt that strangers were not trusted. Natives squatted in the narrow streets and stared at us as we passed. For eight hundred years Harar was a free town and it always seemed a hopeless proposition to storm its thick walls. It was governed by a race of Hararic Mussulmen who had come to Abyssinia from Arabia in the twelfth century and had built and fortified and defended it. They did not change their customs during all that time and even to-day they worship in their mosques just as they have always done. Their religion is more orthodox and strict than in Mecca and Medina. The citizens are bloodthirsty and pitiless and are always quarrelling and murdering, and fifty years ago the members of an Italian expedition that had come to explore the town were butchered at the gates.

Harar still has a reputation for blood among foreigners, although it has been under Abyssinian rule for forty-five years. Ras Makonnen, the present Emperor's father, captured the town and broke the pride of the Hararis. Since then the gates have been open to every Abyssinian race and now there is a confusion of every conceivable type in the crowded streets.

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

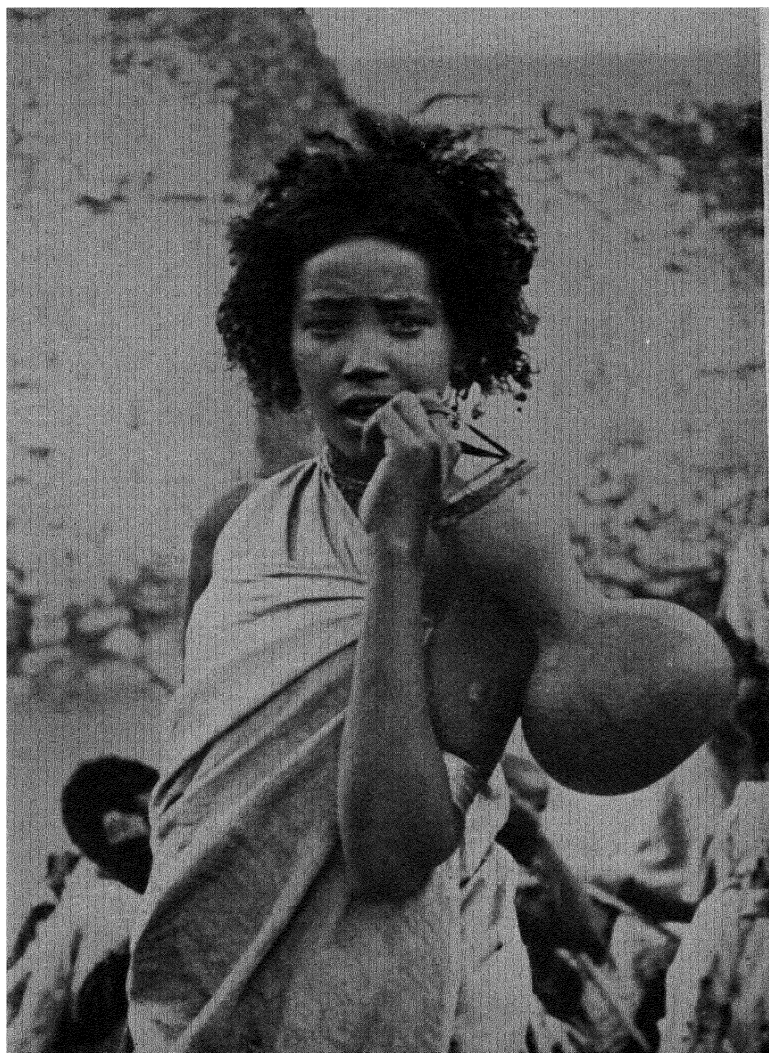
The women are strikingly beautiful, and it is easy to pick out one race from another by their appearance and dress. The Somali girls are the prettiest, and the Gallis the most aristocratic looking, but the Hararis know how to dress themselves to the best advantage.

Only 50 of the 30,000 population are European, and of that small number 45 are Greeks or Armenians, who are for the most part merchants trading the good coffee of the district. The remaining five Europeans are doctors and the members of the Belgian Military Commission. The Italian Consulate is outside the town walls and is kept under a strong guard, for the life of the much-hated Consul is always in danger. He married shortly before the Wal-Wal incident and brought his wife, who was well known for her beauty, to Harar, but she could not stand this witches' cauldron, so the Consul had to take her to Jibuti for their honeymoon. There is one other kind of inhabitant in the town: millions of flies pestered us. They have easy breeding grounds in the dirty streets.

Before we had been long in Harar an Abyssinian sent up his card on which was printed: "Ato Aberra, Officer at the Imperial Consulate in Jibuti."

Ato Aberra was a young Abyssinian who wore European clothes. He had been sent to Harar after the Wal-Wal affair, with the full confidence of the Emperor, and was now working in the office of a certain Lorenzo who was officially occupied as a lawyer, but everyone knew that he was the Emperor's chief spy. Ato Aberra was his right-hand man and was entrusted with the responsibility of watching foreigners, never letting them out of his sight. He had great authority and the hotel manager had to fall in with all his demands. Once my bag was forced open, and my papers rummaged through; evidently the manager had let Ato Aberra into my room while I was walking in the town.

My new overseer gave me an escort of two soldiers to protect me from any unpleasantness in the streets, they kept off the inquisitive with their hippopotamus whips, for a



A SOMALI GIRL OF HARAR



STORING GRAIN UNDERGROUND

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foreigner is still an object of interest. The streets fascinated me. On the market place a new business had sprung up. The munitions dealers sat at their stalls, which were laid out in long rows, selling old bullets for old rifles. They were doing good business, for the Abyssinians were investing all their savings in munitions, thinking that they were then well equipped.

After inspecting the town we went out to see the parts of the town that had grown up outside the walls. At the gates we met new streams of caravans that were just arriving with full loads. They were all going in the same direction, so we joined the flow and soon came to the object of their pilgrimage. They had all been ordered by the Government to bring their corn to Harar where it was being stored in great sheds.

"We are working to have these storehouses full before the war breaks out," Ato Aberra told me.

The granaries were under the ground and the primitive grandeur of the scene reminded me of the Old Testament. The people came with their sacks of grain, emptied them and disappeared, as if they had completed a pilgrimage.

The soldiers lived in new, but hardly modern, barracks nearby. We were let in reluctantly, and we understood the authorities' hesitation. The conditions were worse than in the barracks at Addis Ababa. The men had not been paid nor fed for three months, and lived by begging. But they were not downhearted, and wanted to start fighting as soon as possible, perhaps because they thought that a hero's death would be better than their miserable life.

A beautiful castle was being built near these frightful quarters. It was to be the new residence for the Emperor and his son, the Duke of Harar. Haile Selassie is in close touch with Harar for he is the virtual owner of Ogaden and the richest man in the province. He often comes to its capital which is his birthplace and which he governed before he went to Addis Ababa. He loves Harar but the townspeople hate him even more than the Europeans whom he copies.

CHAPTER XXV

REBELLION IN HARAR

WE were having a rest in the hotel when the Mayor of Harar, Lidi Asfou, came in with the announcement that His Excellency, Dedjazmach Gabre Mariam, the Governor of the province, would receive us at once. We had to change, for the Governor insisted on formal clothes, just like the Emperor, and it was agony to wear morning coats in heat that was 112 degrees in the shade.

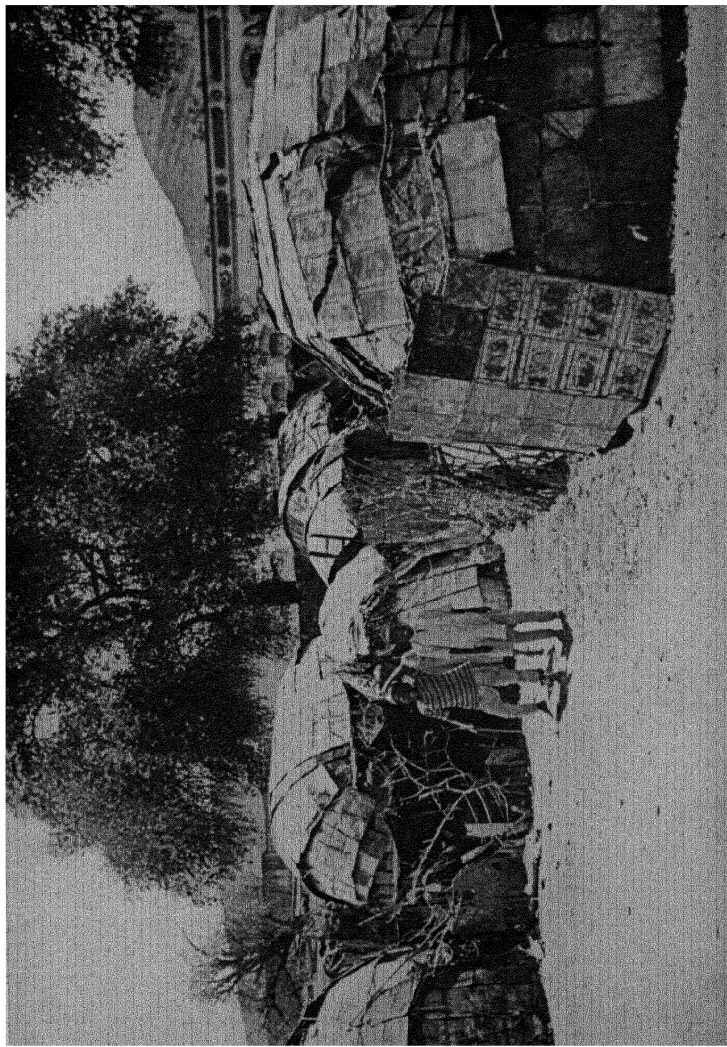
We drove, perspiring, up to the Governor's castle, and had to pass three courtyards that were similar to those at Gibbi. In the first plenty of Tshiki-tshik was going on before improvised courts. The arsenal was in the second yard. It was littered with guns and rifles, and smiths worked sabres on their anvils, while other men turned their sewing-machines, making bullet pouches.

In the innermost courtyard there was an awesome silence. Here was the audience hall of His Excellency the Governor.

The hall was a copy of the throne room at Gibbi. The Governor sat on a small throne in front of the Imperial throne, which the Emperor used when he visited Harar, but now it was hidden from the Evil Eye with curtains. Two rows of gilt chairs had been prepared for the visitors and the Governor rose as we came in and shook hands. He was an old, wily-looking man who smiled most amiably at us although he was known far and wide as one who hated Europeans. The servants began to take up their positions according to rank, and only the Governor's personal servant stood behind him, waving a fly-switch over his bearded head. On the Governor's right



STREET IN HARAR



THE POOR QUARTER OF HARAR

REBELLION IN HARAR

stood Ato Barra as interpreter, and the Mayor, Lidj Asfou. ~~We~~ sat on the left, and fifty servants were ranged down both sides of the room, some of whom waved fly-switches over our heads. Right at the back stood a young slave boy of about twelve years old, holding the Governor's favourite gun. A big lion lay in front of the Governor, but it was too old to be dangerous.

The Governor seemed to fit in with this curious group behind the lion. He was a bitter opponent of the Emperor, and was only kept in check by being given the governorship of Harar. But even here he conspired against him. When I left Addis Ababa I knew that Dedjazmach Gabre Mariam's days as Governor were numbered and that Nassibu had been recalled from Bari to take over his post. This tension made my visit all the more interesting and I wanted to hear the Governor's opinion of the present struggle, for I had heard that he was in the enemy's pay.

"I am prepared for war," he said to me through his interpreter, "and I do not try to delude myself into believing anything else. For the time being all is still, but that is only the lull before the storm. I am old, and the Emperor will have to give my post to a young leader, who can command troops as well as govern by civil law."

Servants then brought in—at two o'clock in the afternoon—champagne, and the corks were pulled with loud pops. The lion shivered in his sleep, but did not wake up. Our glasses were filled, but before we could raise them to our lips, they were full of flies. We were given new glasses and more champagne and I saw the servants disappearing with the spoiled wine; they drank it outside, and as the accident happened more than once, they got so much that they were quite drunk.

We soon took our leave and went to see Abu Hanan, the Bishop of Harar. He is the great political priest of Abyssinia, and he is the virtual ruler of the Coptic Church. He is an unconditional supporter of the Emperor and tries to win the rebel princes of the church to Haile Selassie's side.

Abu Hanan was staying in his monastery thirty miles from the town, in the mountains that we had already passed. There was another interesting guest living near there; Lidj Yassu was imprisoned in the same district. After he had made a second attempt to seize the throne, the Emperor gave him up to the church who had always been his best friends. He was better treated there than in Ras Kassa's prison. The Emperor had a small palace erected for him at the monastery, and the architect, who was the town engineer in Diredawa, gave me an interesting description of the ex-king's European comforts.

"I was commissioned," he said, "to build a house for Lidj Yassu that was to be as comfortable as possible. Money was not to be considered. I was delighted to get the job, and erected a villa in the modern style, with sixteen rooms, numerous bathrooms and recreation rooms, including one for billiards, and a winter-garden. Lidj Yassu is living there now, but actually he ought not to be called 'Lidj' any longer. The word means 'young man' in Amharic. He was named this twenty-one years ago when he was still a slip of a boy, and the title has stuck to him although he has lost his youth. I have seen him frequently in recent times; he has grown into an old man, and has become stout through rich feeding and lack of exercise. He has everything that he could want and the Emperor looks after him carefully. When he was ill some time ago, the Emperor sent his two doctors from Addis Ababa to the palace in the mountains."

This story was given a topical twist a few days later, for quite unexpectedly Lidj Yassu became the centre of interest again. It was reported in Harar, and the news spread like wildfire, that he had been discovered poisoned in his palace.

I tried to verify this story, and drove immediately to the Governor to get permission to visit the monastery and palace, but he had disappeared. But Abu Hanan appeared in the town and denied the truth of the report, swearing by the "life of Haile Selassie" that Lidj Yassu was living still in the monastery.

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The Bishop put the people's minds at rest but he knew about the adventure in which Lidj Yassu had played the lead. Some European secret agents had appeared in Harar a few weeks earlier bringing a great deal of money with them for a specific plan. They apparently left the town by the ordinary route, but in reality they were going to the mountains where they collected a force of Danakil warriors and marched towards the monastery where Lidj Yassu was living. The Governor of Harar had heard of this plot, but as he had been bribed by the agents he took no action. Their object was to set free Lidj Yassu, as had happened so often already, and to crown him Emperor of Abyssinia. He was then to rule according to the orders of Italy, in return for the help that he had been given. These adventurers thought they would make Abyssinia a state like Annam, that is nothing more or less than a French colony although it has its own king. Lidj Yassu did not know what was happening, otherwise he would have taken care to keep out of it, for this ex-king, who still is given a part in the confused plans of the Abyssinian malcontents and their foreign friends, wants to be left in peace. He has become old, and lazy, and has no interest in the outside world, which he has not seen since 1916.

The monastery was stormed and the attacking force were resisted more determinedly than they had expected, for Abu Hanan's spies had worked well, and the Bishop had heard about the plot in time to take action. He had mustered warriors in the monastery in sufficient numbers to ward off the attack with ease. The leaders were captured and they admitted that they had been using Italian money. Thus ended another incident with which Italy was indirectly connected. It must have been financed by unofficial organisations who did not know Abyssinian conditions.

The conspirators were arrested and brought to Harar, the Governor marked down for deposition, and Bishop Abu Hanan became Harar's strong man. He telegraphed the news of his victory to Addis Ababa and the Emperor appointed

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Nassibu, without delay to the governorship of the province and the command of the troops in the south. This was the end of the desperate struggle that had gone on for years between the Bishop and Dedjazmach Gabre Mariam.

I had met Ras Nassibu in Addis Ababa, and during the last days of my stay there he had always been with the Emperor. He was a young man of perhaps thirty-five, but he had a long career of politics behind him. He had been Mayor of Addis Ababa before becoming Governor of Bari; he had transformed this restive province into a dependable pillar of Haile Selassie's government, and with the help of the Belgian officers he had trained some very useful soldiers for the Imperial Guard. Ras Nassibu always wore the khaki uniform of an Abyssinian general and had a private aeroplane. Both of these practices had made him very unpopular, for a Ras who wore European uniform and did not travel with an escort of at least 5,000 men did not seem a real leader in Abyssinian eyes, but more like a hireling of the cursed Europeans. But Ras Nassibu was able to live this down.

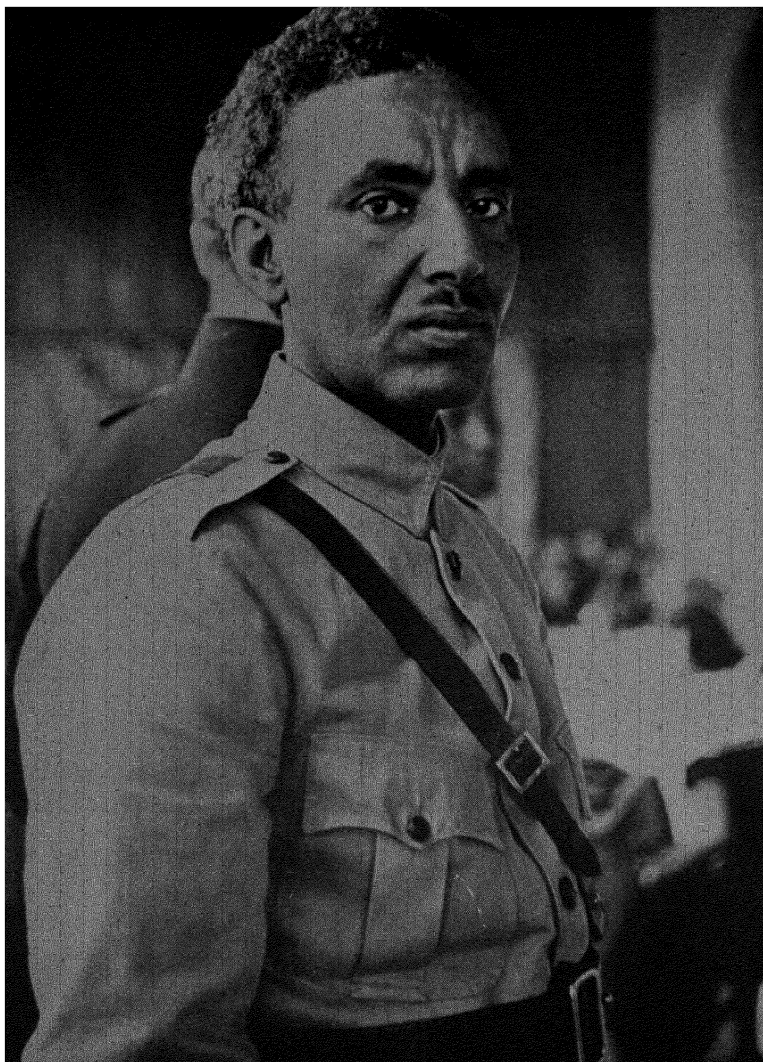
Another reason for Ras Nassibu's appointment was that he had spent many years in Italy's African colonies. He could speak Italian and, through careful study, knew the Italians' methods of colonising, so he seemed to be the right man to frustrate an Italian advance. The town had not calmed down when news came that the Emperor would arrive within a few days with Ras Nassibu.

Elaborate preparations were made, and the half-finished palace was arranged with all speed. The Emperor left Addis Ababa in his luxurious special train and had intended to fly the rest of the way to Harar. But he seemed to be in no hurry—and one never ought to be in Abyssinia—spending some days in the Awash district with his courtiers, hunting big game. Then he went on to Dire-dawa and eventually arrived at Harar.

The following days were a festival in Harar, for the appointment of a new governor must always be celebrated exactly as the Abyssinian customs ordain. Every new "shum"



ABU HANAN, BISHOP OF HARAR



DEDJAZMATCH NASSIBU, NOW GOVERNOR OF HARAR

REBELLION IN HARAR

must give a "shumshirr," a feast to which one to ten thousand, in proportion to the governor's purse, are invited. Ras Nassibu's shumshirr was the biggest in history and no less than 17,000 guests were invited. Ten thousand of that number were warriors, 5,000 of the well-to-do members of the population in the district, and 2,000 were beggars.

It was, indeed, no longer a shumshirr, but a grand "gibr," the largest kind of Abyssinian banquet, which is usually only given by the Emperor. The Lenten fast was over too, so there was nothing to stand in the way of this gargantuan meal.

Men worked for days preparing the tables and seats, which were placed outside the town gates. Peasants came from distant villages with beasts and country products, and tetsh was supplied in huge barrels. Then the guests started to arrive. Shums arrived on foot or mounted on mules bringing their families and servants. Harar was made a metropolis overnight. The new arrivals lived in tents and their camp-fires round the city walls glowed like fireworks in the moonless night.

When the great day arrived a huge tent, capable of holding 4,000 guests, had been erected outside the walls. When the first guests assembled the Emperor's canopy at the end of the tent was still draped from top to bottom with a green curtain, but when we took our seats the curtain was pulled up, and we saw the Emperor and his escort squatting on the ground like all the 4,000 guests.

At one end of the tent countless newly-slaughtered oxen were hung up. Brisk servants cut off large slices of the warm flesh, and as they threw them to the guests the meal began. Tetsh was supplied in big tubs that were filled through pipes, so that they might never remain empty for long. I and my companions had European food while our fellow guests swallowed their raw meat, sweating in their efforts to fill their bellies as tightly as possible in the short space of time allowed. They gulped down the tetsh so greedily that it gushed out from the sides of their mouths on to their white clothes, which were already splashed with the blood of the raw flesh.

Outside the shrieks of the animals that were being slaughtered mingled with the cries of the second relay of hungry diners. Each shift had only a few minutes at table, but they managed to eat enough to last for the next day or two, and who among them could know when he would get another such meal!

Ras Nassibu gave a sign, and overseers came in to drive the guests out of the tent, but only a few paid any attention to them. They went on snatching up pieces of the meat and drinking tetsh. The overseers shouted more loudly but the people remained squatting on the ground, until the lashes of hippopotamus whips hurried out the guests who had outstayed their welcome.

No sooner was the tent empty than the second shift arrived. Everyone touched the ground with his forehead in obeisance to the Emperor, and hurried to their places, trying to catch the bits of meat that were thrown about the tables. The Emperor and his followers ate with each new lot of guests. The fourth and last group had been specially selected, and was allowed to sit on longer, eating vod with intshera. The shumshirr that had begun in the early afternoon did not end till late in the evening, and even then one still saw people in the street chewing raw meat that they had smuggled out of the tent with them.

The whole town was drunk. Men and women danced and sang wildly and licence was the rule. Everyone was contented and unthoughtful of the morrow. The bones of two thousand oxen that had been slain that day were scattered round the eating tent.

And while the town sang and rushed through the streets like the French on July 14th, a secret meeting took place under the chairmanship of the Emperor. All the provincial chiefs of Ogaden, Kaffa and Bari were present. The Emperor made a speech and that same evening they all returned to their posts. They took with them the Emperor's order to prepare for war.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE OGADEN DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

THE excitement died down when darkness fell about eight o'clock, and the gates were closed as had happened nightly for the last eight hundred years. It was May 5th, and I thought of the fighting that had taken place six months previously.

I sat in the hotel lounge and listened to the manager as he told me how Harar heard the news of the battle.

"It was a still night a few days before Christmas," he began, "and the guards were sleeping at the gates which were shut, as usual. The streets were deserted and the natives were sound asleep in their primitive stone houses. There was no moon and the only lights to be seen came from behind the dirty curtains of the dance bars, where a few native revellers were having their amusement with the girls who are always at their service.

"Suddenly the dull beat of horses' hoofs was heard in the distance; it grew louder. It was too dark to see anything, and the guard grew restive, and wanted to rouse the garrison, as the unseen riders came nearer. Gradually it was possible to pick out the horsemen in the darkness. They were Amharis, and across the saddle of many, an unconscious man was slung like a sack of potatoes. There were about fifty horsemen, and they drew up in front of the gates. Their leader demanded to speak to the captain of the guard.

"'Quick,' he said. 'We have no time to lose.'"

"The captain appeared and the horsemen rode in and went straight to the Governor.

"They reported that there had been fighting at Wal-Wal. The men whom they carried on their saddles were twenty-eight of the wounded. Over eight hundred had been left dead, or dying, on the battlefield."

I found it dramatic enough to hear this tale within a few miles of Wal-Wal, but on this "Jubilee" night I was going to hear still more. I was invited to dinner with the doctor who had tended the twenty-eight wounded.

This doctor lived outside the town at the Swedish mission, and I had forgotten that the gates were shut at eight o'clock. It was clear that I would have to leave by stealth if I wanted to accept the invitation, so I walked briskly up to the gates and turned to the guard.

"Ani hakim!" I shouted, which means roughly: "I am a doctor."

My ruse succeeded and the gate was opened. I hurried along the dark road, making for the only light that I could see, for I knew that the mission hospital had its own electric light and that the lighted windows must belong to it.

The doctor was in the hospital when I arrived. He was operating on a boy with serious blood-poisoning. His leg had to be amputated if he were to have any chance of living. The doctor suddenly came out, still in his white coat, and took me into the sterilisation room while he washed his hands. He was downcast.

"It was too late," he said, "for me to do anything. It was only a furuncle in the left leg, a slight thing, that I could have put right if he had come earlier. But his parents took him to the medicine man, and when he was brought to me he already had a temperature of 105, and was unconscious. Our work here is difficult, believe me! Every one of these poor fellows who die here breaks my heart."

The little patient who had died on the operating table was brought out of the theatre. The doctor led me into his sanctuary. It was a plain room with simple furniture, but the surgical instruments glistened behind a glass case.

THE OGADEN DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

"I have only been here a few months," explained the doctor, "and all that you see here I have had to conjure up out of nothing. It is improving, but you would have had to have seen this place two or three months ago to be able to notice the change."

The doctor was my compatriot, a Hungarian, who had won an exhibition scholarship after qualifying, and had gone to New York, where he had studied at the Rockefeller Foundation for Medical Research. He had specialised in diseases of the blood and tropical diseases. He was one of the most promising doctors of his time and a great career had been prophesied for him. When his twelve-months' course in New York was up, he felt that he still had not learned enough and wanted to go to a country where he could study diseases that infected whole peoples, and not just individuals. Abyssinia seemed a likely place for this, so he set out for that country, intending to spend only a short time there before returning home. But now his patients clung on to him, and he had not the heart to leave them.

"It is my duty to remain here," he told me. "These Abyssinians need me. They are ravaged by terrible diseases and I am not exaggerating when I say that ninety per cent of the population are either syphilitic, or suffering from infectious diseases of the eye. They are not difficult people to cure and I have proved that they respond at once to salvarsan spraying. A syphilitic in the third stage of the illness can be cured in half the time necessary for curing a European. But we have no salvarsan, and the Government has no funds, and we have to get everything from the mission. But the mission is suffering from the economic crisis like everyone else.

"The Abyssinians and the other races in this district have great resistance against wounds, for they have hides like elephants, and hardly notice when they are cut or hit by bullets. But they cannot stand up to disease. A native warrior was brought in to me once, half killed by his enemies,

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

and was able to leave hospital in three days. But when he returned later with a slight stomach complaint, I could not save him and he died within a week. I have not just to cure my patients, I have to go on explaining that I, not their medicine men, am the right doctor."

This young doctor, Franz Padar, who had preferred to work here in exile instead of beginning a successful career in Europe, made a tremendous impression on me.

We went into his own house. He had a small laboratory, where he was trying to make his own Wassermann-Reaction appliance, because he had neither time nor money to have his blood tests made in Egypt or Europe. It was an unusual laboratory. Beer bottles were used as test tubes, and he had also made his own apparatus for distilling water. And yet he found time to treat an average of sixty or eighty patients a day and perform four to eight operations. He would have had an enviable practice if he had been paid, but he only got fifteen pounds a month from the mission.

A table was laid in his garden and we had a European supper. There were five of us. The doctor and I, and three big bloodhounds, who ate with us.

"If you had not come we would have been four," Dr. Padar told me, "for I have no callers in this wilderness."

The dogs suddenly grew restless. They left the table and trotted up and down the garden, not barking, just panting and sniffing.

"Aha, the hyænas are coming!" said Padar, and we continued our meal inside. We had just sat down when they appeared sure enough. One after another they prowled across a deep pit that acted as a boundary at the far end of the garden. They looked terribly thin, and for a moment I was sorry for the starving beasts.

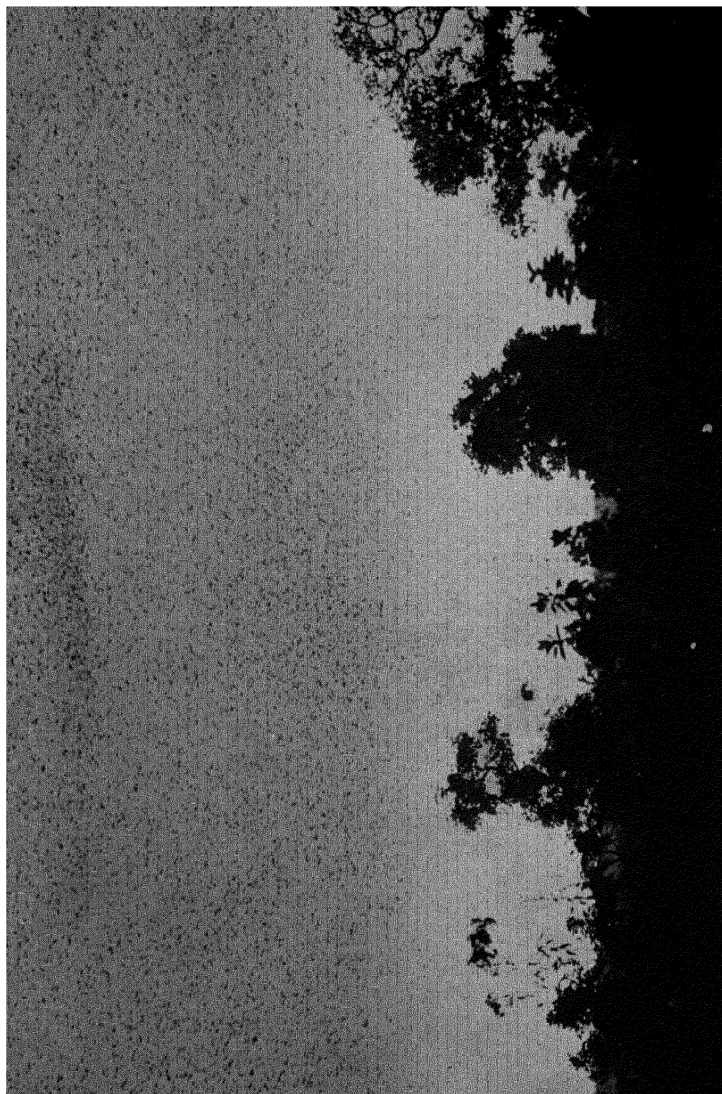
"I thought that hyænas only ate carrion," I remarked. "Why must we run away from them?"

The doctor smiled.

"You do not know the Abyssinian hyænas. They are not



DONKEY PICKED CLEAN BY HYENAS



LOCUST PLAGUE IN ABYSSINIA

THE OGADEN DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

particular like hyænas in the rest of the world. When they are hungry—and they are always hungry—they are quite inconsiderate and are dangerous to living things as well as carrion. Look!" He pointed through the window. "They are even attacking the dogs!"

An exciting fight had begun outside, between the bloodhounds and the hyænas. The doctor talked on:

"Men are not safe when these brutes are about. It has frequently happened that drunken Abyssinians have fallen asleep on the roadside at night and by the morning they have been eaten up."

The dogs were now getting the upper hand and were hunting the hyænas out of the grounds, and we went into another room to escape from the din of their snarling.

"Hyænas," Franz Padar went on, "will play an important part in this war."

As we had come to the topic of the day, I seized my opportunity, and asked him about the wounded.

"Yes," he answered, "I only treated a few of the seriously injured. When they reached me they were all unconscious, for they had been suffering burning wounds in their bodies for fourteen days and were weakened with loss of blood. But not one of them died on the way to Harar, in spite of the appalling conditions of transport. They arrived at night and I operated on them one after the other by the light of every petroleum lamp that we could collect in the building. All twenty-eight were saved."

Dr. Padar then showed me photographs that he had made of their wounds.

"These made an interesting collection. Most of them had bullet wounds, but these pictures show that some were injured by shrapnel. That disproves the Italian statement that they used neither aeroplanes nor tanks at Wal-Wal. The Abyssinian Government offered to buy these photographs, but I had to refuse. As a European doctor I cannot, under any circumstances, bring forward disparaging evidence against

a great power. It is a kind of 'Doctor's Dilemma,' " he smiled; "at any rate the Ogaden 'Doctor's Dilemma'."

"How many casualties do you think there were?" I asked.

"Eight hundred on the Abyssinian side, and the Italians lost about fifteen hundred men. Of course, there would have been much less in a similar battle in Europe, but there were no stretcher-bearers to pick up the wounded after the fighting was over. And even if there had been a Red Cross service they could not have done much, for the country is all steppe-land and bush. There were a few small oases with trees and high grass, in the midst of the yellow sand. The wounded took refuge there. The battle took place by day and the stretchers would not have been able to work on the following night, because the whole area was swarming with all kinds of wild animals. The wounded who had managed to escape death from bullets were eaten up, and on the next day these twenty-eight men were all that were left with life in their bodies. The province of Ogaden is the most ghastly battle field in history and the Europeans who are sent into its desert are lost."

"Were there any European casualties at Wal-Wal?" I asked.

"No. There were only native soldiers in the ranks of both sides. But Italy will not achieve anything in the long run with her Askaris, for these black soldiers naturally sympathise with their brothers across the frontier, and Italy will have to wage war with white soldiers."

"Is the district healthy?" I questioned him.

"Healthy? Oh, it is not unhealthy especially if one takes enough quinine and sleeps under mosquito nets, but I cannot imagine how the Italians are going to do that in their trenches. Europeans get another much worse disease than malaria—madness. Nerves are strained to the utmost here, for the soldiers have to wait for everything: for the enemy, their food, their water, ammunition, commands from headquarters, and for the war itself. Young Europeans will find it difficult

THE OGADEN DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

to bear all that. I myself would prefer to have nothing to do with it!"

It was midnight and I had to get back to my hotel.

"You can't go by yourself. You would never reach the town. Wait a minute, and I will drive you."

He took out his car and we set off, but soon after we had left he had to pull up.

"A puncture, and it would be just here!" He swore, and got out of the car to inspect it. A tyre was flat.

He worked with the wheel for an hour and a half, "just there" where the hyænas held their nightly parade. They padded up and down, fascinated by the glare of the head-lamps, but the doctor was not disturbed and wrestled with the tyre and then blew it up, which was a slow business with his ancient pump. Meanwhile I hid in the car, for I could not stand the beasts' eyes which lit up a hideous green and yellow as they slouched round the car.

At last it was finished and we drove on to the gates with sighs of relief. We stopped in front of the wooden gates and the doctor started a concert on his horn. No one stirred. We hooted, shouted and stormed, but all in vain. The guard slept on behind the walls, as if they had heard nothing.

"Well, there is nothing else to do but sleep in the car," expostulated the fuming doctor, and he laid himself out on the front seat and was asleep in no time. I could not close an eye that night, and I only fell asleep after the gate had been opened, at three o'clock, and I was back in my hotel bedroom. At least I was safe there from hyænas.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE YELLOW HELL OF OGADEN

WHEN we took leave of the Emperor's private secretary in Addis Ababa and were about to set out for Ogaden, I asked for the Emperor's written permit.

"That is not necessary," Ato Wolde Georgis retorted, "we have already informed the Governor of the province by wireless that your expedition should be given every help."

Wolde Georgis looked serious, as if he believed his own words, and if I had not been already seven weeks in Abyssinia I would have set out without more concern. But I had been long enough in the country to be able to recognise falsehoods.

"You do not believe that yourself, my dear Ato Wolde Georgis," I replied ironically. "Why do you not say rather that you do not wish me to go to Ogaden?"

"But I do, the Emperor has permitted it!"

"Where is his official permit then?"

"All right! Ishi naga!"

These two words, "the day after to-morrow," correspond to a categorical refusal in this country, so I left without the Emperor's permit and trusted to luck. I thought that I might find a governor in Harar who would take up the well-known Abyssinian point of view: "Heaven and Addis Ababa are a long way from here," which means in gay Amharic: "The Emperor has not ordered it." I was counting, too, on the independent toll-gate men who were particularly obliging if one paid the "fees," or in other words the hush-money.

But if I had not received the Emperor's permission, I had

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at least got an important letter of recommendation from my friend Ato Haile Makonnen, who was director of customs at that time in Harar, and happened to be in Addis Ababa in connection with a case of smuggling. The letter was addressed to Lidj Asfou, the Mayor of Harar, and was as follows:

WORTHY LIDJ ASFOU,

How are you. I am very well. The bearer of this letter is my friend, the journalist, Monsieur Farago, who very much wants to go to Jijigga and Gerlogubi. He is an honourable man and a friend of our country. You would help me if you would help him. Written in my own house in Addis Ababa, on this day of 17th April, 1927.

ATO MAKONNEN.

The date corresponds to the Abyssinian calendar; our year 1935 is their 1927.

This letter was actually more valuable than the Emperor's permit would have been. I showed it to Lidj Asfou in Harar, and after he had read it he asked:

"When do you want to go?"

"Immediately," I replied with energy.

"All right, the day after to-morrow," the mayor smiled back.

"Let us meet half-way and say to-morrow," I retaliated, for in this country one must haggle. But he would not budge.

"It is not so easy," the mayor told me, "as it looked in Addis Ababa. The people there do not know conditions here. They just send us travellers when they turn up, and we have to bear the responsibility. You will have, at any rate, to sign a statement that you are travelling on your own responsibility. You want to go and you shall go, but at your own risk! We will naturally do all we can to ensure your safety and we will prepare a caravan. I will send my own men with you and you can depend on them. Ato Aberra will escort you. Dinastalin—good-bye!"

The same afternoon I got a letter from Lidj Asfou.

"The caravan will be ready for the road at four o'clock to-morrow morning. Come earlier to the town hall!"

That day I saw Abyssinia for the first time at four o'clock in the morning. The sun was not up, but I could see in the grey light that the day had begun for the natives. The streets were crowded, men squatted on their haunches and disputes were heard before the pavement judges as if it were midday instead of dawn. The Abyssinian is an early riser, and his restless mind drives him out of doors with the first light of morning.

But Lidj Asfou was the exception, and although he had said four o'clock, he did not turn up till shortly after eight, and then alone, without a sign of a caravan. It would have been useless to have lost my temper, and I was rewarded for my patience by departing two hours later—a record for punctuality in Abyssinia.

I was excited, for after all everyone is romantic at heart and I was only too pleased to be travelling on mules to Jijigga, instead of driving in a taxi in Berlin, as I had been doing ten weeks previously.

I was accompanied by an impressive number of people. The journey was expected to take five days, but Lidj Asfou was taking no risks, and had provisioned us for two weeks, and he had also sent on runners ahead to the shums who ruled over the districts that we had to pass, with the order that they were to supply us with all that we required. Our kit was loaded on donkeys and they kept down the pace terribly. My escort of twenty-five soldiers of the Guards, rode on Abyssinian mules while Ato Aberra and I had Italian mules, with the result that we were always far ahead of the rest of the expedition, for the Abyssinian animals like the natives themselves, are worn out at an early age. The army does possess a few good Italian mules but they are kept for war and the soldiers hardly ever see them.

Once you mount one of these animals it is advisable to leave

THE YELLOW HELL OF OGADEN

your watch behind, for caravans do not reckon the time in minutes or hours, but in weeks and months; time stands still just as if the earth had suddenly stopped on its course round the sun. No one is in a hurry and pressing forward to his destination, least of all the donkeys. It often happened on my trip that these beasts suddenly went in the direction of Harar and we had to wait for hours until they could be cajoled into turning round towards Jijigga.

Ato Aberra often rode off to make enquiries.

"We must be extremely careful," he explained, "for the tribes who live in this district are excited, and it would not help much if you said that we were not Italians!"

"Yes, I have heard a barbaric fairy tale?" I said, somewhat intimidated. Ato Aberra was seriousness itself.

"That is no fairy tale! It is a terrible, but widespread custom. Before these Danakil warriors can marry they must produce some of these terrible trophies, and a white victim is the equivalent of three natives!"

Evidently a journey in Ogaden has become a dangerous undertaking. As long as Ato Aberra led us along the frequented caravan routes we had no fear of an attack, but when we reached lonelier parts, we were in real danger. In Ogaden diplomacy is unknown, and the tribes only argue with concrete things. For them the war is not a thing that might happen in the future, but an actuality, and they are not displeased, for they love fighting. They have neither Imperialistic nor patriotic aims; they just want to kill and it does not matter whom. If there is no one else a neighbouring tribesman will do, but they prefer Italians.

The Emperor exerts no influence over these rebels and although he recently sent some punitive expeditions to Ogaden, the chief engineer of an Abyssinian frontier commission, a German, Kurt Beitz, was put to death in the most horrible way by a Danakil tribe. Death lurks behind every tree in Ogaden.

Only twenty minutes after this conversation with Ato Aberra, we were confronted with a band of Danakils on horse-

back. They let us pass and when we had ridden on some distance, they rushed after us throwing poisoned spears. Ato Aberra shouted:

"They are the best spear-throwers in the world. Once they get within seventy yards they aim with deadly accuracy."

"What shall we do?"

"It is best to stop."

We pulled up our mules, and Ato Aberra dismounted and waited calmly till the Danakils caught us up. There were only six of them but in less than fifteen minutes we were surrounded by some fifty warriors. Ato Aberra was able to speak to them in their language and was able to pacify them, but all the while they handled their primitive knives with ill-concealed pleasure.

I had now been riding continuously for five hours and although I had tried to quicken the pace at the start, it was I who suggested that we should unsaddle and pitch camp. It was unheard of to have a rest before sunset, but I simply could not go any farther.

The stout sleeping tents were put up and the fire was kindled as the burning heat of the day died down. The eucalyptus trees scented the night air, and bright-coloured birds flew round us; Nature was luxuriantly green and we seemed to be on a picnic instead of going to a battlefield. When it was dark we lit our carbide lamps which attracted flocks of enormous flying beetles. Mahmud, a Somali Mahommedan, who had been given to me by Lidj Asfou as a personal servant, brought me a rifle. My rifle! It was a good enough weapon too; a 7.9 FN Mauser which had been taken from the military arsenal.

"I have loaded it, monsieur," he told me.

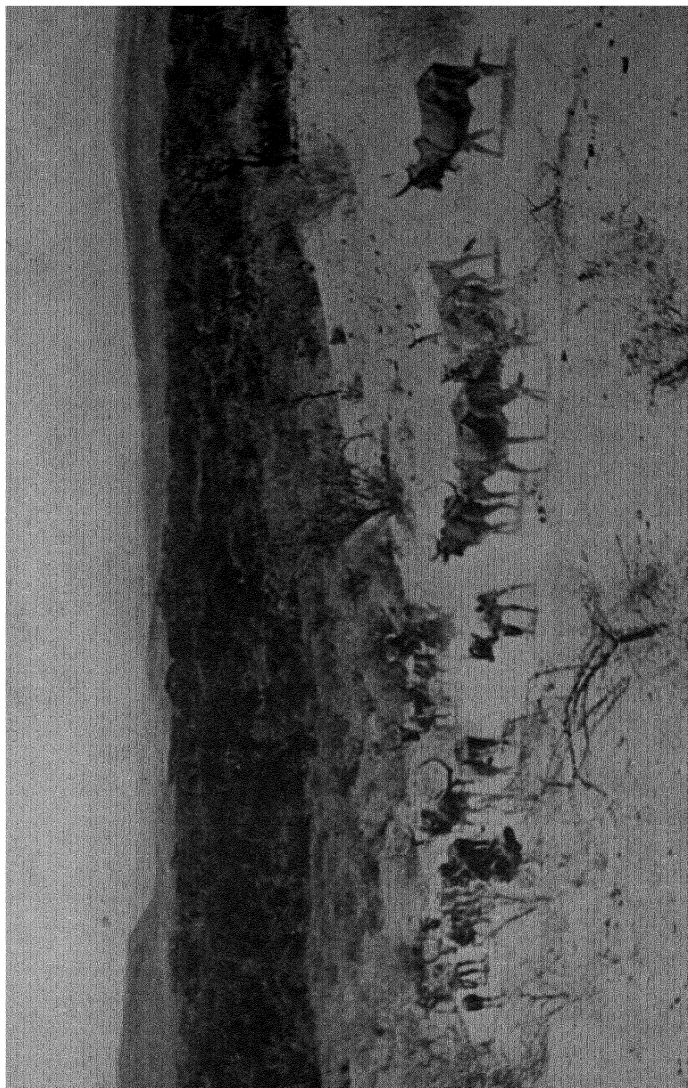
"Is that necessary?" I asked.

"Yes, you must sleep with it loaded, monsieur," he replied.

It sounded bad, but I crawled under my mosquito-net with my loaded rifle, after taking off my shoes and loosening my shirt at the neck.



IRREGULAR NATIVE SOLDIER



A DESERT STORM RISING IN THE OGADEN DESERT

THE YELLOW HELL OF OGADEN

Mahmud brought in a carbide lamp, followed by a swarm of flying beetles.

"Who am I going to shoot with this rifle?" I asked him, for I still felt rather nervous.

"It is wiser to have it, Monsieur. Animals come here to drink at night, and the Danakils above all are unpleasant people."

Ato Aberra was posting the watch. Ogaden was dangerous.

This was my first night in the open in Africa. Soon the most grisly concert that I had ever heard began. I could not distinguish the different noises, but Mahmud, who was squatting at the foot of my bed, gave the necessary explanations.

"That was a lion, monsieur, that was one of the donkeys, and that long shriek was a hyæna," he chattered on.

The hyænas alarmed me more than any of the others. They came within ten yards of my tent and howled so infernally that I shall never forget them as long as I live. The watchmen hunted them off without any qualms; they were used to the beasts for there are thousands in Abyssinia, and the Abyssinian is only frightened of them when they have "human faces." Then the natives fly, for that kind is the devil himself, although they are only legendary, and have never been seen.

I had just become accustomed to this nocturnal serenade when a new sound terrified me. I thought that it was the devil laughing at the entrance to my tent, but it was the fiendish laugh of the hyæna.

I thought of the European soldiers who would have to sleep in open trenches in the middle of Ogaden instead of in strong tents. I did not expect to get any sleep that night, but after half an hour, exhaustion triumphed over fear, and I slept.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BATTLE OF MONKEYS

I SLEPT without interruption until four o'clock, when Mahmud woke me up softly, and we broke camp.

We passed many small villages and before we had gone far, we rode past some tukuls. Ato Aberra pointed towards them: "Galli tribes live in these huts. They are not common in this country and quite harmless."

All the same I loved my rifle and had given it the pet name of "little mauserl," and in weak moments, "mausi."

We soon reached the "main square" of a little native village and were received by the shum and his magistrate. The shum was a young good-looking Amhari who had just been sent to this part. Ato Aberra dismounted and, making a low bow, introduced me. The chief was called Ato Taffarra. He was a Fitorari, a major, in the Abyssinian Army. His regiment of 3,000 men was encamped not far from the village. He had just brought them from the province of Shoa, four weeks' march away. He ordered his mule, and we rode out to see his soldiers.

It is useless to compare Abyssinian soldiers and their equipment with European soldiers. Fitorari Taffarra's regiment consisted solely of men who had been given rifles and the chance of dying for their country.

These soldiers had been supplied with ammunition when they left Harar, and for them that meant that the war was as good as started, for they had never been given ammunition before.

THE BATTLE OF MONKEYS

Ato Taffarra told us about the plans for war, and I was able to learn a lot. In Addis Ababa I had only seen modern troops drilled, perhaps a little too brilliantly, by Belgian and Swedish officers. But here I was seeing the original type of Ethiopian soldiers who still fought as their ancestors had fought for generations. They obviously had an astonishing instinct for war and that gift will give them some chance of victory in a war against great odds.

The poor wretches had had a great day. After a long interval they had been given food. Fitorari Taffarra had inexplicably commandeered seventeen oxen, and vod was being prepared on open fires and intshera was drying on the grass. The atmosphere was thick with the smell of strong pepper and the smoke. The warriors waited apathetically while their comrades cooked the meal that was so long overdue. They had no spirit and seemed to have given up all hope.

Almost all of them were ill and obviously undernourished. Some weeks later I read in a report from Rome that Fitorari Taffarra's soldiers had been decimated by dysentery. That was of course untrue; but they were suffering from gastric troubles and terrible diarrhoea. They developed these complaints on their four weeks' march through the desert where they had only found three comparatively pure wells, and had been forced to drink foul water.

The sick had been given the only medicine that the Abyssinians carry with them, quinine, but that was a godsend to these poor men, and they took it in large doses with the result that they became still weaker. They ate what they could shoot or find on the march, and they were contented, because they did not know that soldiers in the filth of the front line are living luxuriously compared with them.

When the meal was ready, I sat down beside Ato Aberra and Fitorari Taffarra and ate vod with intshera, and drank tetsh which had also been commandeered. This wine worked wonders, and in a short time the camp which had been as still as a cemetery was like a fair. The men were transformed

and cut all kinds of capers. I had already been told about the powers of tetsh.

"Provisioning!" someone who understood the conditions, once said to me. "What would be the point? The main thing is that they should get tetsh rations. Once they are drunk, they cannot be held back, and heaven protect everyone from an Abyssinian regiment under the influence of that drink!"

Fitorari Taffarra seemed to understand this peculiarity and all his soldiers were provided with tetsh wherever they were. I am convinced that tetsh supplies will be much more important than ammunition, and they certainly have more of the former.

We ate, and drank, and belched as polished manners demanded in the country, and all the while Fitorari Taffarra abused the Europeans. I had never heard a chief speak so openly although I was to hear even plainer speech on the battle-field. Usually they speak a flowery language and obey an old Abyssinian maxim: "What comes into your mouth, helps you, what comes out injures you!"

It would have been impolite and inconsiderate if we, who were well fed, had eaten too much of the soldiers' vod and intshera, so we soon took our leave and rode on to Jijigga. Mahmud went on in front, for he was a Somali and felt at home in this district. He had been away for two hours and we were just beginning to feel anxious, when he came into view on the horizon. He was obviously excited and held on to his saddle with one hand as he gesticulated with the other in the direction from which he had come. I looked at him through my telescope and could see that he was shouting but he was too far away for us to hear.

We remained standing while he galloped up to us. He babbled something in Amharic and I looked rather helplessly in the direction in which he kept pointing. Suddenly I picked out a big black mass, that moved. I could see through my glass that they were not men. They must be animals.

THE BATTLE OF MONKEYS

Lions, leopards, or perhaps jackals. That was a nice mess at this time of day when wild animals never came out.

Ato Aberra rode up to me.

"I hope they are not lions," I said.

"No!" he replied looking very serious. "They are not lions. Something worse: monkeys."

Monkeys! I wanted to laugh but Ato Aberra's grave face made me consider.

"How are they worse than lions?" But he did not reply and only shouted:

"We must see that we get out of the way!"

He turned his mule and I did the same, and followed him blindly to catch up with the others, who had already gone back. Natives know best when there is danger. But we were too late, for the band of monkeys had seen us and were now advancing at a terrific speed. Within a few minutes we were surrounded by the chattering horde. There were one or two full-grown baboons among them but the majority were black and white Guresa monkeys. There were about four-hundred of them.

Ato Aberra noticed that I was at a loss, and he rode in front, and above the shrieking I heard him shout:

"Ride for your life!"

And he put the words into action and galloped off. The monkeys stuck to us, and they would have been harmless if the baboons had not been there to incite them. I must admit that I had expected to have to do anything in this life but run away from monkeys. Now I saw that they could be dangerous in a big band. This band was unusually large and for that reason Ato Aberra did not risk waiting until it marched off.

They were still chasing us, but Ato Aberra saw that the time had come to make use of our rifles. He gave the order to fire and he himself fired twenty-five rounds. The soldiers of the guard also used their primitive weapons and even I initiated mausi. We did not stop to see the result of our

shots, but rushed on. The chattering rose to a yell and it sounded as if the monkeys were still following, but just as we were expecting to be overtaken they stopped and gathered round their dead, and then suddenly retreated into the bush.

We waited for half an hour before going back, for we thought that they might be waiting in ambush for us. Then we sent Mahmud to scout out the ground, and he signalled to us that there was no danger. We galloped back to look for the dead monkeys, but they had vanished. Their comrades had carried them away and pools of blood were the only evidence that our bullets had found their mark.

"It might have been worse," murmured Ato Aberra.

We had to ride on quickly now to make up for lost time, for we had to reach Jijigga before night-fall. It would have been playing with death to have spent another night in the open.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FIVE PROBLEMS OF OGADEN

JIJIGGA lies forty miles east of Harar, but we reached it before night fell and slept in the "hotel." It had two guest rooms; terrible holes with two beds in each. Between the beds a candle burned on a low table. The mosquito-nets were so thick that you could not see the blankets through them, but still, we were in a stone house with thick walls and not in the wide desert with its thousand dangers.

I woke up next morning, happy to be in Jijigga. For five weeks I had wanted to come to this town, which I had not heard of in Europe. I had always been advised not to, in Addis Ababa. Now I had achieved my desire.

Jijigga is not a town even in Abyssinian parlance, but only a village, and an evil one at that, for it is a cross between a half-European settlement and a native village. It lies on a fairly important road, a flattering term for the route from Harar to Jijigga. But although the road is so bad lorries travel on it and when they rattled passed us I thought how much more comfortable I was on the broad back of my mule.

The traffic that goes through Jijigga is on the way to Berbera, the port in British Somaliland. This port is important to Abyssinia, for the Japanese ships unload their wares here, and they are transported by lorry which is much cheaper than the railway from Jibuti, where the heavy freight costs would not make it worth while to buy these cheap goods. Arms are also brought by this route. The smugglers land them on a lonely part of the coast and transport them either via Zeila or

Berbera. This arms smuggling is not on any big scale and what is brought into the country is bought by private customers, not the government.

After Jijigga the road forks. The poorer section goes to Gerlogubi, and at the moment this is the busiest road in the world. More than a hundred thousand soldiers have passed along it recently, marching to the frontier, and that is a modest estimate. A Greek barman in Jijigga told me that 200,000 had gone that way.

I saw 3,000 soldiers in Jijigga. I visited their camp early in the morning which happened to be the right moment, for ammunition and arms were being given out. The men who had no rifles of their own were supplied with arms and a little ammunition after they reached Harar, but they had to give them up to their officers at night before going to sleep. There were two reasons for this precaution. Firstly there was a danger of these warriors getting out of control, when they had rifles in their hands for the first time, and they might try to rebel. Secondly the great number of tetsh bars in Jijigga might easily lead to drunken shooting. During the day the troops were in control and nothing unforeseen could happen, but at night they were not to be trusted.

The warriors were queuing up in two long lines. After each man had been handed a rifle in the first line he took his place at the end of the second to get his supply of five bullets. The rifles were of every conceivable type from 1870 to 1935, and hardly any two men had the same pattern, but all the bullets were for 7.9 bore Mausers, so only a small proportion of the men had ammunition that was useable. They did not seem to worry about that, and in any case the butt-end was more important in their view. The point was that they had bullets that had been made for war.

We left Jijigga to explore the province of Ogaden. After riding for three hours we came to the first sign of life that we had seen since leaving the town. It was a well deep down in a cleft in the ground. Rough steps had been cut down to the

THE FIVE PROBLEMS OF OGADEN

bottom, and even then there was not much water. There was great activity at the top, but the sexes kept strictly apart when they were drawing water, men and women never going down the steps at the same time. Almost all their pitchers were standard Shell petrol tins each holding four gallons. Quite often natives would turn up with twelve of these tins, having ridden for three or five days on their mules, to fetch water supplies for a month. The drawing of the water was done with good order, and these savage Somalis suddenly became unassuming and gallant, helping each other and keeping discipline, but the moment they were two miles away from the well this comradeship was forgotten, and they attacked their companions whose buckets they had helped to fill an hour before.

Water is the most acute problem in Ogaden. I remembered the words of King Solomon to the Queen of Sheba in an Abyssinian legend: "Of what use are your gold, platinum and diamonds when your country has no water!"

I was feeling the lack of water myself and I longed for a drink. Italy seems to be prepared for this water shortage, judging by the water-tank cars that I had seen when I came through the Suez Canal.

Another problem that awaits the invading troops is the country itself. That is problem number two. Ogaden looks as if it had already been rent by war. There are deep ruptures in the ground that look like natural trenches, but are only the result of the perpetual drought. Sometimes the ground is rocky, covered with sand, and cactuses are the only living things to be seen, sometimes it changes into a green paradise; but the luxuriant parts never extend for more than a few square miles and the general impression one gets is desolation, sand desert follows on stony desert, bush on steppeland, at one place the grass grows as high as men, at another the ground is bare. In these pitiless surroundings live fierce men and wild beasts. Nature is not friendly towards her European guests.

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

The temperature was 135 degrees and there were no trees or the slightest shade anywhere. It was getting on our nerves; our throats were dry and we felt terribly weak. Our mules too, were not fit and trotted along more and more slowly.

Our spirits had reached their lowest ebb, when fifty Somalis surrounded us before we had time to take action. Their interpreter asserted that there was a Somali among our servants who owed a girl in their village eighty talers. Ato Aberra tried to disclaim responsibility for this lover's debt, but they were not to be contradicted.

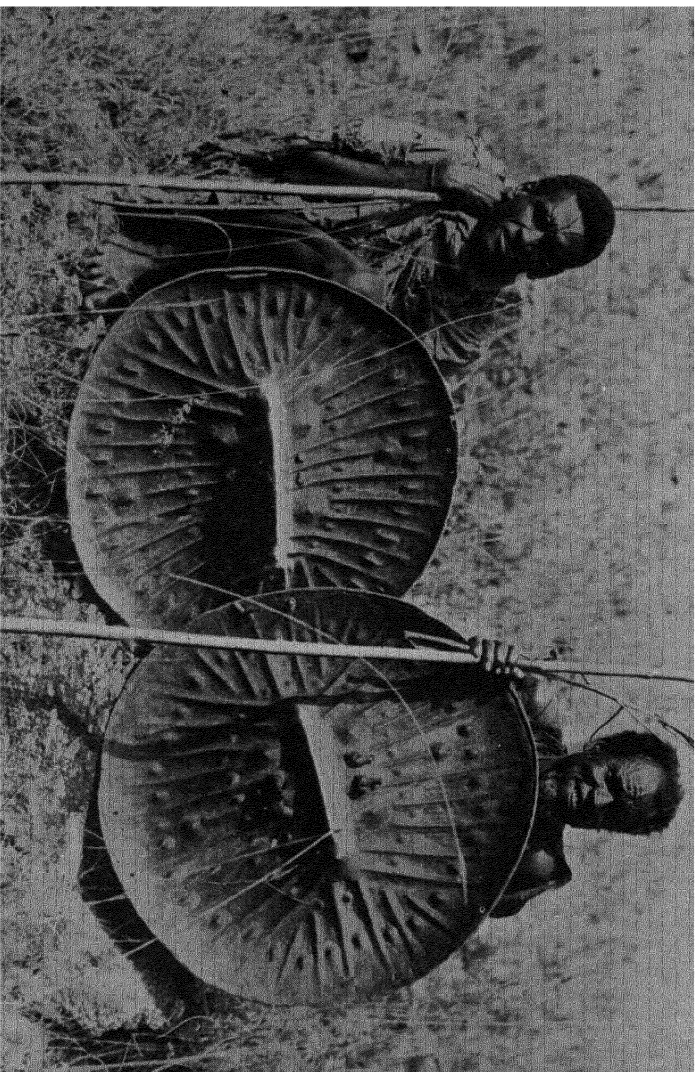
"If he will not pay, then you must. We have waited long enough for the money."

It would have been madness to have fought it out, for although we were well equipped and they had no rifles and were not strong in numbers, one can never foresee what might happen in this country and the fifty men might have suddenly grown into an army of five hundred or five thousand. We bargained with them instead and in the end I was poorer by twenty-eight talers, one taler's "redemption money" per head for myself and my escort. Whoever pays a debt demands a receipt, and Ato Aberra scribbled one out and the chief "signed it" by making an impression of his thumb with the ash of a spent match, below the writing. We rode on again leaving the inhabitants, the third problem, behind us.

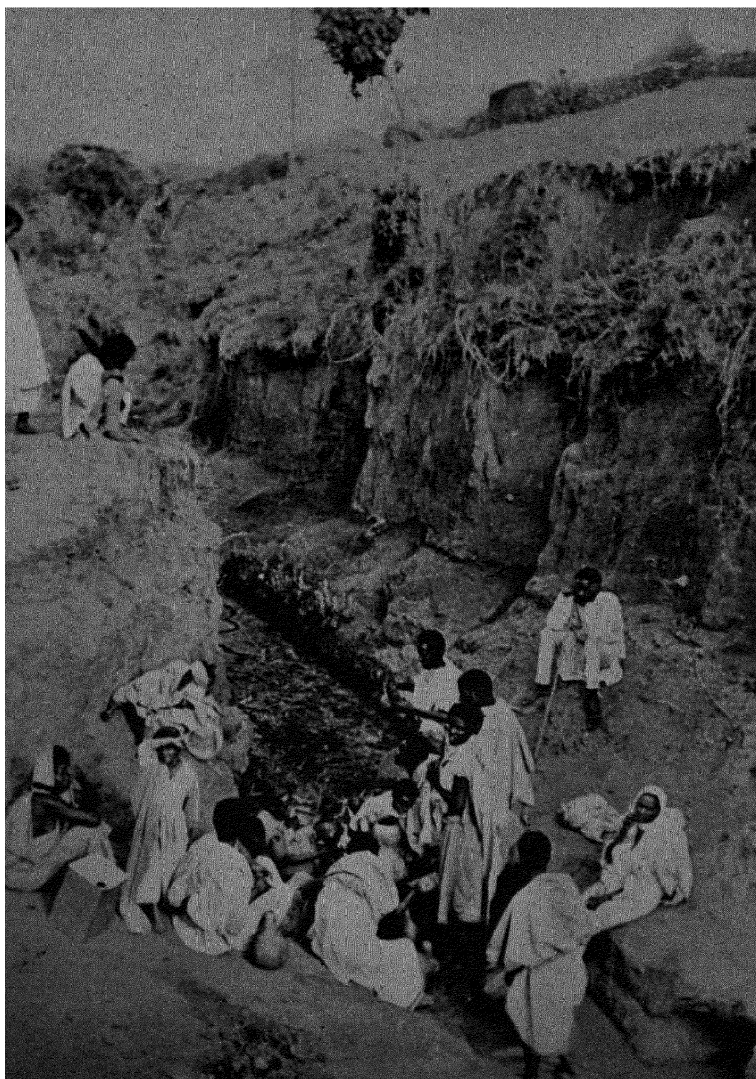
It was not difficult for these warriors to conceal themselves in this country. They lurk hidden in the grass; who they are waiting for, no one knows, but they are always in ambush, and when they are least expected they spring out like lightning. The country has infinite possibilities for camouflage and that is one of the chief enemies of the European.

When we were discussing the attack on us, Ato Aberra asked me:

"Can you imagine a machine-gun attack in this country? You are told to shoot. All right, but at what? There is nothing to aim at, and the bullets bury themselves in the grass



DANAKIL WARRIORS WITH SHIELDS OF RHINOCEROS HIDE



THE WELL AT JIJIGGA

THE FIVE PROBLEMS OF OGADEN

and the desert. And if the machine-guns have been aimed in the direction of the enemy, you may be sure that they will appear in exactly the other direction, and cut down the machine-gunners before they have time to fire."

We spoke quite frankly about the prospects of the war, and Ato Aberra who had been very reserved when we started was quite candid.

"The people of Abyssinia do not want war, but these wild tribes in the frontier district do not care whom they fight, as long as they can have some kind of disturbance. These rebels are not Abyssinians, and we should be happy to be rid of them. A few Abyssinian chiefs who are bribed by the Italians do even more damage. They are the enemies of the Emperor. They are hopelessly irreconcilable, and say quite plainly, 'rather Italy than Haile Selassie II' The Emperor has many enemies who will make war and help the Italians to hunt him down."

That was the fourth problem in the province of Ogaden.

CHAPTER XXX

THE FLAG AT DOUENLE

WE rode aimlessly about the country where so many thousands of Abyssinians had been absorbed during the last three months. We knew that they were encamped here but we saw nothing of them. Ogaden was dreary and deserted as ever. We came on a few scattered dwellings whose inhabitants were weakened by privation, and heat, and allowed us to pass without trouble.

I could not understand why men had to fight and die for this desert, and thought of the beginnings of the conflict with mixed feelings. It had started with a wish to connect two colonies, and had developed into a huge plan for colonisation. I had seen enough of the country to recognise the differences between Abyssinia with its great possibilities, and the Italian colonies that were only a financial burden. It seemed clear that Italy not only wanted to keep her position as a great power, but she wanted to make further claims and turn independent Abyssinia into an Italian colony.

Ogaden depressed me. It was too monotonous and dangerous. I could not see that there was any great necessity for bringing the flower of a country's youth to this desert where they would die of hunger and thirst, and fall prey to the wild beasts and savages. It did not seem worth while. This piece of land would never be a safe booty.

I was more sorry now for the Italians than for Abyssinia. There will be neither victory nor defeat in this war. Italy may be able to over-run the land and achieve her ends after years of struggle. Perhaps Mussolini may succeed where

THE FLAG AT DOUENLE

others have failed and his generals will make a vassal state out of this last independent Empire in Africa. But it will cost blood and the secret wealth of Abyssinia will be small compensation for the thousands of young men who will be shot down. One need not be a pacifist to think in this strain. Three days in the yellow hell of Ogaden is enough.

In the evening we returned to the well which we had passed that morning. An exciting collection of animals had come down to drink, but we were able to drive them off. The water was too good and we were dependent on it.

The next day I was wakened by a strange servant.

"Where is Mahmud?" I asked, but he gave no reply, and when I went out Ato Aberra met me in front of the tent.

"Mahmud has disappeared. We must see what he has stolen."

We opened my boxes but I did not miss anything at first. Then I remembered my gun.

"I thought so," said Ato Aberra. "A gun like that makes a harmless Somali a fearless thief. It was not difficult for him to get that though."

"Where has he gone," I asked, feeling sympathetic toward him.

"Who knows! The ways of the bush are unexplorable. He probably yearned suddenly for the desert as is not uncommon among these people, and the rifle was an additional encouragement. But it will only be an ornament, for they never bother about ammunition. He is not interested in that at all!"

And sure enough, my pouch still lay in my tent, not where I had put it yesterday. So he had had it in his hand and still not taken it!

Ato Aberra did not speak a word as we wended our way back to Jijigga. He was sunk in his thoughts and seemed to be turning something over in his mind. Just before we arrived at the town he rode towards me and whispered softly as if he were frightened anyone would hear.

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

"I should be obliged if you would not write what I told yesterday."

It I did not answer.

The heat was still terrible and clouds were gathering in the sky. We pressed on, wanting to reach Jijigga before the rain began. But we were too late. All of a sudden the skies opened, and Ogaden was able to show us its fifth problem.

We rode through the rain, water streaming down our faces and clouds of steam rising from our bodies and the mules. We were wet through but we did not stop. At least we tried not to but the rain won in the end. After half an hour we came to a river that had been dried up in the morning. We would have been swept down by the current if we had tried to cross.

"There is no point in looking for another way," said Ato Aberra. We would find the same thing everywhere. We may as well camp here until the rain is over."

"How long will it last?" I asked.

"A few hours or maybe a few weeks! We must hope for the best."

In twenty-four hours the rain had stopped and the river had disappeared. The bed was as dry as if it had not had a drop of rain for a year. We soon arrived in Jijigga after that, and rode straight on to Harar.

Lidj Asfou looked relieved when he saw us.

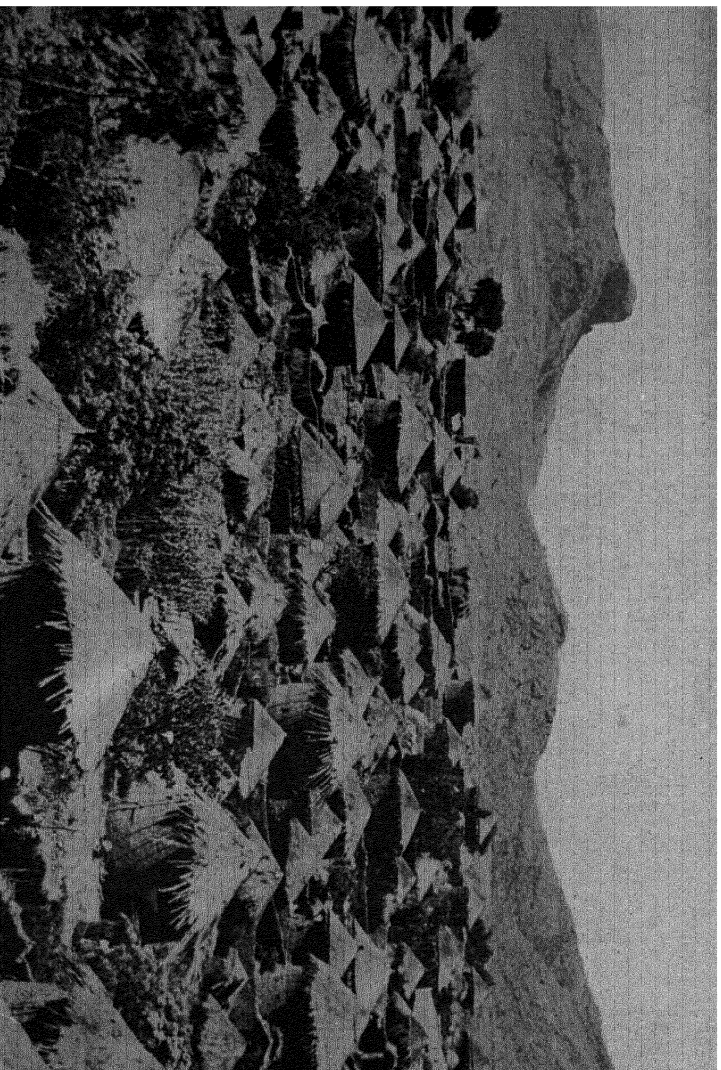
"Thank heavens," he said, and shook hands heartily.

"If the Emperor had heard that I had let you go into the interior I would have paid for my wilfulness with my post. But I was under an obligation to my friend, Haile Makonnen, and I could not refuse him."

"Has Haile Makonnen already returned?" I asked.

"No!" replied the mayor. "He has been made a Blatta and sent into the interior. He understands the position at the frontier and such a man is necessary there. I have by the way a telegram for you."

It had been forwarded from Addis Ababa, and was from the



ABYSSINIAN VILLAGE OF TUKUS



OGADEN LANDSCAPE

THE FLAG AT DOUENLE

Associated Press. It was already some days old. "Stay until further notice," was the message. But I did not stop to think; I wanted to leave Abyssinia. It could not offer me anything more, I thought, and I was in desperate need of rest and European surroundings, in order to put my thoughts and impressions of the last months in order. I telegraphed a two-word message: "Not staying," and then ordered a lorry to take me to Diredawa.

We left next morning at three o'clock. The roads were dry, and we hoped to catch the train that left Diredawa at seven. But I had miscalculated, and we did not arrive until ten. It was the toll-keepers, not the roads that had delayed us this time. One man had kept us waiting for three hours. You have to be prepared for such interruptions in Abyssinia. The bad roads are not the only obstacles.

It was Wednesday, and I had to wait in Diredawa until the following Saturday. This provincial town is comparatively comfortable, for it has been given a French atmosphere by the French railway company, but I was terribly bored. There were offices and workshops belonging to the railway in which many Frenchmen were employed, and they knew how to transport their home life to this place. There was electric light, a newsagent who sold French papers, four-weeks old, a perfume shop, and also really pretty French women who changed for dinner, and made up most beautifully, in the Hotel Continental. There was a cinema that played daily and the Europeans played bridge. But I found the place uninteresting because it was not Abyssinian.

On the Saturday I met the Abyssinians again in the customs house. Our bags lay open at their feet, and they rummaged through them again from top to bottom with their long sticks. There was a heathenish row and I could not hear a word that they said. It appeared that they simply wanted to charge duty on everything.

I had a great many presents in my bags so they had their eye on me. I paid willingly enough for my typewriter, that was

ABYSSINIA ON THE EVE

only natural, but I did not see why I should pay on the presents, that I had been given by the Emperor. Why does he give presents if the money is going to flow back into his pockets in this way!

I explained the position to the chief customs officer and he saw my point of view. He asked to see a permit. I had all kinds of these things with me, some in French, which the customs officer understood well. Then for my own amusement I showed him my Berlin Underground season ticket. I was allowed through at once.

That was my last adventure in Abyssinia. We drew out of the station slowly and by midday we were eating lunch in Aicha, which is still in Abyssinian territory. Then we arrived in Douenle. The train stopped for a while. No one bothered about our passports, and the station was empty.

The only movement was the green, gold and red flag that flapped from a high staff. I looked out of the window as we passed it and saluted the flag of Abyssinia, then I leaned out and watched it, until it disappeared round a bend. Adieu, Abyssinia!

Who knows whether you will still be a free land when I return.

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